

MODELS OF THE SELF

A STUDY OF SELFHOOD IN NINE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY AUTHORS

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS (Regulation 6.9)

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Title of Thesis Models of the Self: A Study of Selfhood in Nine Late Nineteenth
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This thesis is a study of the selfhoods created by nine late nineteenth century authors in certain of their works. Within each text, it seeks to define those crucial aspects of selfhood that determine, and are a determinant of, the literary work. In doing so, the thesis takes as its theme the model nature of the self; the view that there exists no substantive, definitive self, but only descriptions of a variety of selfhoods. Such a view is not merely imposed on the texts by the argument of the thesis, but also arises partly from the changing views on selfhood current in the late nineteenth century and from the concept of the self that a writer brings into play in a work. Within the necessary limits of this theme, the thesis attempts to illuminate the complex workings of a model of selfhood within a literary work.

In chapter one, the mechanics of two models of the self are contrasted: in Wilde's critical works, the selfhood that stresses its freedom to change itself, and in Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles, the selfhood that is seen to be predominantly constrained by determinism. In the second chapter, two models are compared - that of Conrad in 'Heart of Darkness' and that of Meredith in One of Our Conquerors. Both texts explore the model whereby a self may realize itself by forming a relation to its own self. Such a relation, however, raises a number of problems. Foremost among these is the attendant difficulty of the self to articulate itself as continuous in its own history, without defining its selfhood as substantive in nature.

Chapter three discusses the mechanics and effects of the models of a narcissistic self in the work of three authors, while chapter four analyses the workings of three models of nostalgic selfhood. All of the works in these chapters present examples of self-relation whose origins may be traced to the two extremities of freedom (affecting narcissism) and determinism (affecting nostalgia) discussed in chapter one. In both these chapters particularly, the extent to which an author was aware of the model nature of the self he had created determined whether he used the model for his own purposes, or was used by it. This in turn partly determined the quality of the resultant art work.

Chapters five and six are a discussion of the developing model of selfhood in two works by Walter Pater. In chapter five, the model of aesthetic self as it is presented in The Renaissance is considered and its problems analyzed. Chapter six shows how this deficient model was changed, in Marius the Epicurean, to a type of sympathetic selfhood which deeply influences the form of the novel's fiction. In this last work, Pater creates a new model of selfhood that achieves a self-relation, and that articulates itself - through a via negativa - by its absence throughout most of the novel.

The Conclusion summarises the thesis, and states the usefulness of the theory of models of self to the evaluation of literary worth.

There is no way of being for everyone.
All things stay dark to him who is
not himself.

— Karl Jaspers, Philosophy,
translated by E.B. Ashton
(Chicago, 1971), vol.3,
p.133.

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INTRODUCTION

i. The Model Nature of Selfhood

What is 'selfhood'? It is a peculiarity of Western thinking that there is no stable identity to the idea of 'selfhood'. It has consisted of a synthesis of concepts such as will, imagination, feeling, reason and mind; yet when we think of these in reference to 'selfhood', it is hard to come to a definition. The term's opacity denies entry to the questioner at a deeper level than the concepts aforementioned, not because it is a synthesis of these concepts, but because it appears to be the very ground of being - fundamental, speechless experience.

How may we define it? It is a fundamental premise of the modern era that it is in the nature of man to have no permanently defined nature distinct from his historically constituted existence. If this is the case, then there can be no direct and permanent answer to the question, 'What is the self' (unless we believe with Hegel that history has a purposeful movement). Historical relativism is not enough, however, and in order to discuss selfhood in relation to art, we must know what we mean by it. Now inquiry into the nature of the self encounters a curious phenomenon that has often been taken for granted, but was illuminated by Colin Turbayne in his book, The Myth of Metaphor.¹

Turbayne pointed out that there are two ways of apprehending any statement about mind or science: one may regard the utterance as analogical or metaphoric, or as the literal truth. Thus, when Locke describes the mind at birth as a tabula rasa, it is certain that he does not speak, nor does he intend his reader to accept the statement as, the literal truth. But when Newton speaks of bodies 'attracting' each other, it is less certain whether he intends the statement as figurative or literal. The metaphor appears to have created the relationship it is designed to illuminate. Turbayne therefore draws up two categories - those who employ metaphor, recognizing its analogical character, and those who employ metaphor without distinguishing between it and the literal truth. Thus, in applying these categories to theories of 'models' of mind, he writes,

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if X is aware of the metaphor while Y is not, X says that Y is being taken in by the metaphor, or being used by it, or taking it literally. But for Y it is not a case of taking the metaphor literally at all, because for him there is no metaphor. He is speaking literally, or taking it literally. Similarly, in the case of models, X says that Y takes the model for the thing, while for Y there is no model. The model is the thing. (pp.23-4)

This procedure describes precisely how a writer may use conventionally accepted models of mind without realizing it (being used by models); or how he may see through the model's metaphoric hypothesis and may either reconstruct, upon his own deconstruction, another model, or suggest new facets to the older model (using the model).

Yet whatever models a writer may use or be used by, this is all he may express as regards the subject of selfhood and the mind. For selfhood cannot be expressed unless in metaphors and models - history teaches that there is no immanent, literally true model of the self. The historical and evolutionary sciences, well-established by the end of the nineteenth century, supported this view; and it is probably fair to assume that all the writers dealt with here were aware of this relativity regarding selfhood. But this relativity holds a more important consequence for the literary mediation of a model of selfhood. Turbayne calls the attempt to identify a model with the ultimate, literal reality vain:

it is like trying to observe the rule 'Let us get rid of the metaphors and replace them with the literal truth'. But can this be done? We might just as well seek to provide what the poet 'actually says'. I have said that one condition of the use of metaphor is awareness. More accurately speaking, this means more awareness, for we can never become wholly aware. We cannot say what reality is, only what it seems like to us, imprisoned in Plato's cave, because we can never get outside to look. The consequence is that we never know exactly what the facts are. We are always the victim of adding some interpretation. We cannot help but allocate, sort or bundle the facts in some way or another. (p.64)

If indeed the self is made up of models and real truth is hidden from us, then 'there are no proper sorts into which the facts must be allocated, but only better pictures or better metaphors' (p.261). In other words, there is no absolute selfhood that functions as

the only true paradigm of selfhood: there are merely versions of selfhood, some better achieved in texts than others. This is important not only for the literary works discussed here, but also for the argument of the thesis, for it means that there is no single structure of selfhood to which others may be compared and value judgments made accordingly.

Now it might be said that Turbayne is guilty of an absolutism of relativism in the above statement, because he is dealing, in a philosophical milieu, with eighteenth century science and epistemology. But if his theory of models is applied to aesthetic productions, then this charge can no longer be held against it - indeed, it is the main attraction of the theory. For if 'we can never become wholly aware', then by analogy a writer can never fully understand the model of selfhood he is using. The model does not exist as an essence, an Ideal Form, but in the aesthetic, creative decisions of the author. Its possibilities are therefore almost infinite, and no author can, or would want to, take account of them all. On the contrary, a good model or metaphor of the self, 'like a good portrait, does not hold a mirror up to the face of nature but vividly illustrates some features of it and neglects others'(p.214). But if a writer can never be fully aware of the model he is using, it is still possible to say of his text that he is either aware of the model enough to be able to use it, or unaware of it so that he is used by the model. The point of difference between these two extremes is impossible to state in the abstract - only in reference to a particular text does it take shape. For it is a major difficulty in dealing with the 'metaphysical problem of being' in literature that selfhood, like the experience of being, is indescribable in terms of itself.² It is incarnated in works by the choices of subject-matter and style, which determine, and are determined by, the author's awareness of his model.

In the late nineteenth century this was not a concept that could be easily articulated. At that time the deductive sciences of the mind still dominated the conception of the self, positing the self as an entity composed of faculties such as will, reason, passion, imagination and the like. But nearly all of the best literary works around the turn of the century at

least questioned this structure of selfhood; and often criticised it by couching their art in terms other than the older faculty model allowed. In a number of writers a curiously parallel exploration takes place, one where models of self and categories of mind are not seen as unalterable, but as fluid, in process, capable of original and multiple meanings, sometimes simultaneously, without self-contradiction. Wilde indicated this new complexity and fluidity when he remarked in a review article that

there is something curiously interesting in the marked tendency of modern poetry to become obscure. Many critics, writing with their eyes fixed on the masterpieces of past literature, have ascribed this tendency to wilfulness and affection. Its origin is rather to be found in the complexity of the new problems, and in the fact that self-consciousness is not yet adequate to explain the contents of the Ego... The unity of the individual is being expressed through its inconsistencies and its contradictions. In a strange twilight man is seeking for himself, and when he has found his own image, he cannot understand it. Objective forms of art, such as sculpture and the drama, sufficed one for the perfect presentation of life; they can no longer so suffice.³

Most of the best late Victorian and early modern literature exhibits an awareness of the trembling, diaphanous nature of the model of selfhood, and that it is truer to say with regard to our experience of being that the metaphor or model 'creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing' (Turbayne, p.12). And precisely because the focus of literary creation is not logical coherence but the fictional use of language, an author may change a model of selfhood without recognizing the full implications of his innovation. His awareness of his model may also be too limited. He may even know that assumptions about the self are merely tentative models, or actually metaphors, yet now know how to break out from the prison of the older model. Such fundamental incertitude more often than not manifests itself as stylistic incoherence, where a writer has not fully understood how a simultaneous awareness of a model of selfhood and consciousness and a concern for the more familiar regions of style and narrative context may create a unique literary intersection.

ii. Selfhood and Interpretation

If a model of selfhood can be identified in a literary work, how is this done? How can one extract and isolate a model from an aesthetic product? This critical procedure must be initiated and carried out with a degree of caution, even foreboding. The reason for this is simple. Interpretation is entirely removed from the text: it exists as a parallel text. It cannot encompass the entirety of the original text's inter-relationships, for if it did this, it would be the original text. Yet by dealing piece-meal with the original text, criticism inevitably distorts it, and therefore distorts its model. The work is what it is, not because of the concept of self it holds, or the manner in which this is appropriated or attacked; but because of the complex inter-relationships that make up the meaning of the whole structure. Such meaning is never immanent within the utterance, but is received only through interpretation. We derive interpretation not from the words themselves but from out various constructions of them, and the circumstances which we perceive surround them.

It is a hermeneutic circle of sorts, to be broken only by first identifying what Ramon Fernandez has called the 'philosophic substructure of a work', and thereby choosing a deliberate point of entry. Nor is the problem resolved by seeking definite origins of influence in sources and source history. In the first place, such an attribution of meaning rests on a philosophical mistake, the Cartesian mistake of construing an intention and its principal expression as two quite separate things. Furthermore, sources cannot explain fiction, for they are both interpretations; and to site correctness of interpretation on sure ground outside the text is only to avoid interpretative difficulties within the text, where language communicates meaning in its vastly complex skein of mutually reliant significances. Whether Pater derived his aesthetic dialectic in The Renaissance from Hegel or Joachim of Fiore, for example, is of secondary importance with regard to the original handling of it in the text.

Fernandez has defined what he determines by his useful idea of a work's 'philosophic substructure' - it is 'the body of ideas which, organized by a hypothesis, supplies an explanation of the essential characters of that work by relating them to the problems of general philosophy which may be implied by them'(p.15).

Fernandez's statement is a shrewd analysis of one way of approaching the text. According to him, philosophical ideas are not laid on top of the text in order to 'explain' it. There is, he says, a 'body of ideas' in the work which implies 'problems of general philosophy'. But he is not so naive as to assume that the corps of ideas is to be found, pristine and perfect, like cut diamonds in the blue earth of the text. This corps of ideas is subject to more or less interpretation by every reader. It is always 'organized by a hypothesis', which consists of a reader's ideas and his intentions and interpretations in the act of reading. The final product, a 'philosophic substructure' that will explain the 'essential characters' of a text, is unashamedly synthetic, not found in the text, nor, certainly, placed there by the reader. The 'philosophic substructure' is itself an interpretation, and must be judged successful or unsuccessful by its explanation of the text's 'essential characters'.

Fernandez's idea of a text's 'philosophic substructure' is one solution to the hermeneutic circle, and it is the one adopted here. Thus, the organizing 'hypothesis' is the model nature of selfhood as outlined in the previous section. This organizes the 'body of ideas' in each text, creating its 'philosophic substructure' by revealing their relation to more general philosophical cruces.

This, then, is my justification for the procedure of identifying and isolating models of selfhood in a work. It is a solution that agrees with the ultimate aim of literary interpretation, for its criterion of success lies not in the philosophical structures, their logic and coherence, but in exegesis. The more convincing an interpretation is of the text, the more successful it is. But no interpretation is ever completely successful. Interpretation breaks into the text with the tools of its trade (Hermes is patron of thieves), but no thief ever comes away with all the loot. The house is never empty: enigmas and figures, paradoxes and cruces remain intact, awaiting later, more cunning thieves.

iii. The Thematic Enquiry

Before delineating the cruxes of selfhood and the texts that are examined in the thesis, together with some problems that arise in the process, it would be helpful to examine some types of recent similar explorations undertaken by other critics into the subject of selfhood. Often the starting-point for such a study is what perhaps can be only vaguely defined as a sense of period: the sense that there exists a recognizable structure which may yield a new coherence if analyzed. This type of structure is different from literary periodization in that it is not a self-conscious labelling, either contemporaneous or academic. It is linked to both, but it is more comparable to Pareto's 'residues' - the fundamental current of ideas which lies beneath and explains the surface manifestations that may appear at first as superficial, or inexplicable, or both.

The point is an important one to clarify, for it underlies much of contemporary academic criticism of the period's art and literature. All the terms and categories applied to it are clearly inadequate - the extraordinary complexity and diversity of energies in the late century must inevitably prove them wrong. Critics still disagree with each other in sweeping statements about period:

as the origins of Aestheticism are confused, so too is its demise. At some point in the early 1890s... Aestheticism modulated into that movement which we now call Decadence.

The aesthetic movement was the main cultural and literary force in England around the end of the eighteen-nineties, and was rampant about 1890 to 1895.⁴

It is one thing to see the reaction and interaction of things in a period; quite another to postulate that aspects of the period's culture can be subsumed under vague headings. Wilde, himself a notable victim of this at the hands of critics, pointed out the mistake in such trivializing Zeitgeist criticism when he said in 'The Decay of Lying', 'in no case does [Art] reproduce its age. To pass from the art of a time to the time itself is the great mistake that all historians commit'.⁵ Yet the feeling persists that there is somewhere a unifying principle or set of principles which, when dwelt upon, will account for the variety of the literature and its tantalizing contrasts and

likenesses. It is this feeling which is the main motive for thematic or synoptic studies of the period's literature.

Much of English-speaking thematic criticism concentrates less on the individual work than on a subject within the related realms of art, history, sociology and psychology. This method is a variant of Auerbach's exploration of the 'inner history' of a text (Geistesgeschichte), with lesser emphasis on the text's purely linguistic features. The first two major examples of such criticism - both models of their kind - are Mario Praz's The Romantic Agony (1936), and Frank Kermode's Romantic Image (1957). Following Kermode's pioneering essay, other critics began to re-evaluate judgments and scrutinize terminology anew. Some works, like J.H. Buckley's The Triumph of Time (1966), and John H. Lester Jnr.'s Journey Through Despair (1968), are more concerned to quarry from the literary artefact in order to illustrate the history of an idea or ideas; others, like Patricia Ball's The Central Self (1968) and Masao Miyoshi's The Divided Self (1969) apply a definite theme in order to illuminate aspects of the literary artefact. The latter two in particular set out to chart ideas about the self in the period's literature; but too often Ball and Miyoshi merely gloss over their own theme, presenting no analysis of it in depth. Both books, like many others of their kind, hesitate between hermeneutics and exegesis, and as a result, do not contain the analytical penetration vis-à-vis their themes that their criticism requires. In consequence, their interpretations seem less convincing, and more narrowly descriptive than they ought to be. All of these studies succeed only when they break down category barriers, effect new correspondences between works and illuminate hitherto neglected facets of them. Their criticism is essentially historical, dealing closely within the period. Where their work is not predominantly an historical survey, their philosophical premises and substructures have often been empirical or empiricist - a good example of this being Robert Langbaum's The Mysteries of Identity (1977).

Reinterpretation based on themes also finds enthusiastic adherents in French criticism - notably in the works of Georges Poulet, Jean Starobinski, Maurice Blanchot, Gaston Bachelard,

Charles Mauron and the early Roland Barthes. Jean-Paul Richard, for example, defined a theme thus: 'un thème serait alors un principe concret d'organisation, un schème ou un objet fixe, autour dequel aurait tendance à se constituer et à se déployer un monde'.⁶ These critics have close links with the work of French structuralists and post-structuralists, and their critical interests are similar - that is, the attempt to structure the non-explicit levels of a text, the hidden movements within an author's work and life, and the secret intentionality discernible in the origins of the creative act. Their criticism frequently results in brilliant insights and aperçus; but it suffers from a curious debility of method. Much of it appears to exist in a vacuum because it draws its structures not from inter-relationships within the work of art, but from pre-conceived structures applied to it. Mauron's structuralist psycho-criticism, for instance, adopting an objective scientific paradigm, imposes a rigid psycho-analytic template upon the work of art. In itself this can be a creative method of criticism; but Mauron too often neglects the part that language plays in changing and even creating structures not only within the text of its creative genesis but within the structure of the critical act itself. What happens then is that the psychological drama, or the closely-argued structure of character analysis, or the close reading of syntactic and rhetorical structures, become the true centre of criticism, and the literary text, relegated to secondary importance, becomes for each critic a wax tablet - Derrida's magic writing-board - upon which criticism scratches its cryptic cyphers. Literature and meaning all too often disappear as deconstruction devolves into destruction of meaning, and the work is passive and silent below the endogamous structure.

These two different types of thematic criticism, English-speaking and French, stem from two quite different critical and philosophical traditions. The best work in both methods lies not at the extremes of the traditions, but in those criticisms which manage successfully to create abstract critical structures out of both the historical reality of the literary artefact and its recognizable aesthetic unities. By doing so, criticism transforms a finished artefact into an unfinished, re-creative,

three-cornered argument between reader, text and critic. Examples of such criticism are the works of Poulet, Kermode and, latterly, Ellen Eve Frank. It is this synthetic criticism which is undertaken in the following discussion of selfhood.

iv. Synopsis of Thesis

It remains to give a brief synopsis of the structure of the following six chapters, and to explain the lay-out of the thesis. If this discussion's 'hypothesis' defines the problem of selfhood in the modern era as a choice between models, then the important question becomes, why does the author choose this model? As we saw in section two, this and the basic question as to the extent of his awareness of his model of selfhood can be answered if criticism is directed at the cruces of his model-choice - that is, the 'philosophic substructure' of the text, upon which much else in it rests.

Thus, in chapter one, works of two authors, Wilde and Hardy, are considered. The specific problems here deal with the extent to which the self exercises free-will or is determined. For Wilde, the self exists in its freedom to choose its destiny repeatedly - it embraces possibility. For Hardy, the self exists in a world that continually straitens and warps it - it endures necessity. These two problems in the texts are related to each other antithetically, but nevertheless both authors were dealing with a similar crux, in very different formal conditions and contexts. Chapter two continues this discussion of selfhood by examining the unity of selfhood in works by Conrad and Meredith. Granted that a selfhood has some measure of self-determination, how may it change and yet be recognizable; be a changing unity? Both authors posit a self that is neither fixed nor changing, neither unified nor fragmented, but that exists as a relation to its own self. Such regenerative self-relation is opposed in the respective texts by a selfhood which is substantive, atemporal and rigidly fixed. Both selfhoods, but particularly the former, are difficult to articulate, and so the problem of the communication

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of this selfhood occupies a central place in these works and this chapter.

These forms of selfhood determine to a considerable extent the literary value of the works; and in the conclusions to each chapter the relation of self model to literary value in each work is summarized. As indicated above in section two, the discussion does not end in a philosophical statement, but in an aesthetic judgment.

In chapter three, the mechanics and effects of three models of narcissistic selves are examined in novels by Wilde, George Moore, and in imaginary portraits by Arthur Symonds. In that all three models desire the temporal domain of endless possibility for their selves, they present an extreme form of the selfhood dealt with in relation to Wilde's criticism in chapter one. Furthermore, their narcissistic self-relations are an extension of the model of the self-related selfhood discussed in the previous chapter. What is of interest here, as always, is the extent to which this model of selfhood contributes to the success or failure of the work as literature. This is true also of the models examined in chapter four, where the dynamics of the nostalgic self are explored in three models as they are embodied by The Well-Beloved, A Shropshire Lad and Ideas of Good and Evil. Where all three selfhoods here spring from a sense of fixed security arising out of the temporal domain of the past, they are extremes of that closely determined selfhood evident in Hardy's fiction, and also examined in the first chapter. Dependent as they are on the play of their own memory and hope to define their selves, their models are, again, versions of those self-relations discussed in chapter two.

The following chapters deal with two models of selfhood as these are presented in two works by Walter Pater. While the models are different from those discussed in previous chapters, they are concerned with identical cruxes - the self as free, as determined, as a self-relation, as narcissistic, as nostalgic. By means of an aesthetic argument in The Renaissance, Pater composes a model of selfhood which re-evaluates the root conceptions of selfhood - including the above - that had repeated themselves since the time of the Pre-socratics. In Marius the Epicurean,

he alters and extends this model by emphasizing the quality of compassionate love that lies beyond the aesthetic model. The model of selfhood presented by The Renaissance is a deficient one; and the more coherent and attractive self of Marius is only one example among others in the thesis of a selfhood successfully embodied in, and determining, a literary work. After all, the criteria for judging the success of a model of selfhood in art are aesthetic, not logical or metaphysical; and therefore capable of accommodating manifold versions of selfhood.

As to the choice of texts examined in the thesis, I shall cite Erich Auerbach, and say that

my interpretations are no doubt guided by a specific purpose. Yet this purpose assumed form only as I went along, playing as it were with my texts, and for long stretches of my way I have been guided only by the texts themselves. Furthermore, the great majority of texts were chosen at random, on the basis of accidental acquaintance and personal preference rather than in view of a definite purpose... I was by no means interested merely in presenting what would serve my purpose in the narrowest sense; on the contrary, it was my endeavour to accommodate multiplex data and to make my formulations correspondingly elastic.⁷

Auerbach's words serve as an explanation of how the thesis was written. The thesis has a definite argument, of course, and the texts are strategically arranged accordingly; but the argument is by no means limited to the texts which embody it. There is no reason why the particular analysis of selfhood should not be extended to works written by, for instance, Gissing, Lionel Johnson or Hopkins.

It is perhaps necessary to explain the rather unusual mixture of genres to be found, particularly in chapters one and four. This apparently arbitrary juxtaposition of texts, together with the order of the texts (and especially the analysis of Pater at the end of the thesis), and the separation of texts written by the same author into different chapters, can all be explained by reference to the theme outlined above. This theme does not ground its authority upon historical influence between writers, nor does it follow the history of ideas in the period. Rather, the thesis is concerned to widen its reader's understanding of the texts by uncovering antinomies and similarities within

and between texts, using the theme. Chronological unity is therefore of secondary value; unity of thematic argument, of primary importance.

The argument of the thesis is carried in the texts as they are interpreted and arranged in the discussion. This process entails uncovering each work's 'philosophical substructure' in order to site it in the thematic argument. All the texts are deliberately arranged so as to carry the thematic argument: this is a concern that overrides other possible arrangements. That The Renaissance is the source of many late nineteenth century ideas, for instance - particularly in the work of Yeats, Symons, Wilde and Moore - is widely acknowledged, and one would expect to find the text being used to cast light on these authors. But this critical move is of little relevance here. What is important is that in this work we find a complex handling of the cruces involved in the aesthetic mediation of selfhood (especially, instances of narcissism and nostalgia), which can be used to criticize the work. Now, although Pater's works are chronologically previous to the other authors's works, to discuss them at the start of the thesis would be to invert the thesis's entire argument - from the simple antithesis of selfhoods in chapter one, to the more complex antitheses of selfhoods in chapter two, to the further models of self-relation in chapters three and four. Pater has his place at the end of this argument, for he explored these models in The Renaissance, and in Marius the Epicurean arrived at a new model of selfhood. There is a danger, however, in placing Pater at the end of the thesis - that, due to his sense of an ending, the reader will take Pater's model in Marius as the climax of the argument. The thesis must not be interpreted in this way: having read through the previous chapters, it will be easier for the reader to analyse and recognize Pater's achievement; but this should not overshadow the previous writers. It must be remembered that all the writers in chapters three and four produced work that was not damaged by the flawed application of narcissistic or nostalgic models. The thesis does not find its conclusion in Pater's model, therefore, but, as the final conclusion makes clear, in the sum of all its constituent argument.

The separation of one author's works into different chapters can be similarly defended on thematic grounds. An author never writes continuously on one topic, but writes out of a constellation of interests - one may shine out in this text, others may illuminate that text. It is possible to separate these interests out in a text (without denying the manifold complexities of it), and therefore to treat the same author's works in different stages of the discussion's argument. It is legitimate, though, in different texts written by the same author, to expect the argument to relate the works to each other, and indeed this is done, with regard to Wilde and Hardy, in chapters one, three and four, and Pater, in chapters five and six.

If the theme of selfhood is the unifying agent and centre of the thesis then genre differences, like chronological analysis and source history, become secondary considerations in the discussion. It is clearly impossible to compare a novel and a poem formally in the same way as, say, two poems. But while the effect of the theme on each text's form is considered - as it must be, in literary criticism - these forms are not compared directly, one to another, but the different effects that the theme has upon them. Once again, the emphasis is not placed on genre difference and comparison, but how the theme may affect different genres in a similar way - chapters one and four are examples of this.

As the choice and order of texts needs comment, so too does the critical range of texts require explanation. It is generally understood, for instance, that One of Our Conquerors and Tess of the D'Urbervilles are better novels than The Well-Beloved or The Picture of Dorian Gray. It might be argued that in devoting equal space to all the texts discussed I am implicitly disregarding the criteria of literary value. This would be a misreading of the thesis. The question of literary worth is intimately bound to the theme of models of selfhood. This range of critical worth in the thesis is intentional, for if I am to 'accommodate multiplex data', as Auerbach puts it, then it is important as regards my theme that I consider not only those texts whose models of selfhood succeed, but also texts which embody unsuccessful models.

Now, it is the argument of this thesis that, in the modern period at least, an unsuccessful literary embodiment of

selfhood is one where the author has misunderstood or refused to acknowledge the metaphoric or model nature of selfhood. Such a failure, I argue, opens up serious flaws in the literary work which the writer must either compensate for, or produce flawed work. This cannot be proven here, of course, but only in the empirical critical analysis of each text that forms the core of the chapters. There, the subtle relation is traced between the success or failure of the models of selfhood, and the success or failure of the texts as literary works. This point is crucial: above all, the thesis sets out to prove that an understanding of the structures of selfhood in a work is indispensable to our judgment of literary value in the work. The argument assumes as a priori, therefore, that for the text, any text, 'existence is inseparable from value'.⁸

Such an intimate relation between selfhood and the aesthetic product exists in all of Western literature, and indeed I could have chosen to examine texts from all periods of literary history. As M.H. Abrams has put it, 'in any period, the theory of mind and the theory of art tend to be integrally related and to turn upon similar analogues, explicit or submerged'.⁹ But such a relation changes with the general cultural presuppositions apparent at any time in the past; and to deal with these fully would require more space and time than is at my disposal. I have focussed, therefore, on one historical moment - namely, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which is commonly regarded as the start of the modern literary period.

Although at times in the thesis philosophical and Freudian terminology is used, and reference made to texts, this is not done with any philosophical or psychoanalytic intent. Philosophy is not literary criticism, but criticism cannot do without at least a mediated or applied form of philosophical analysis. This is essentially evident when one is dealing with the mental spaces created and implied by language in the text; when one is engaged in 'an exploration in depth, an elucidation of the work's hidden contents, in short, a kind of bringing forth of latent meanings'.¹⁰ Furthermore, structures of selfhood and their concomitant problems of value in the work, its 'hidden contents', are not the usual estate of literary criticism. In order to express how models of selfhood exist, and are implied by language, I have been forced to search

further afield for terms that are not in the common trove of English-speaking literary criticism. Thus, recognizably Existentialist and Phenomenological terms are employed throughout the chapters. These are used for their radical insights into the problems of selfhood; and although the tenor of the discussion is coloured by them, the discussion itself does not take its stand upon any one critique of Being. Heidegger's, Jaspers's and Hannah Arendt's work, for instance, has helped me to locate and define various mental events which are likely to be crucial in shaping an individual history. But Existentialist and Phenomenological philosophies, although more amenable to literature than most philosophies on account of their emphases on form and method, still have as their core not an aesthetic unity (pace the later Heidegger) but a philosophical statement. In a similar fashion, psychoanalytic criticism too often does not direct itself to the work and its psychological structures, but to the nature of the creative art and intention, or to the nature of reader response. Of course, as has been pointed out above, philosophy, the creative mind and reader response are implied in the work's psychological structure; but they are not the main focus of this discussion. Since the structures of selfhood I intend to discuss are inseparable from artistic fictions, my main purpose is to point out how these structures or mental events are told and resolved in the writing. For it is in the temporal nature of literature that a reader's experience of models of selfhood is first of all a reading of narrative device, dramatic incident, character and style. Thus, if Freudian terminology is adopted in chapters three and four, this is merely because the Freudian model of mind explains the phenomena of narcissism and nostalgia better than the Adlerian or Lacanian models, for instance, or the more traditional concepts of mind. It is not intended to displace criticism of the text, but to locate and define the crucial relation between the structures of selfhood and literary value in the work.

The varied critical approaches made to the texts are necessitated by reason of there being not one absolute selfhood. If there were, it would require only one method, applied repeatedly to the texts, in order to uncover it. There are instead only models, which differ widely in structure from each other, and require different critical approaches. To try to analyze a model

of narcissistic selfhood in Tess, for example, would simply be a wrong approach to the novel's model, for there is no evidence for such a model in the text.

Several pitfalls in thesis-writing have been consciously avoided - the apologetic 'maybe' and 'probably', which ends, as one critic has it, in the 'death of a thousand qualifications'; and the security of acknowledged sources and the assumption of radical newness, the Scylla and Charybdis of research. The best criticism proceeds by sensitive, acute synthesis of critical predecessors, and of reader, writer and text. May it be said, finally, that no pretence of exhaustiveness is made. The regions to be explored are vast; there have been many before and doubtless there will be many after, until the blank interior is filled.

I declare that this thesis is my own work,
that it has been composed by myself, and
that no part of it has been published.

Paul Mahoney

Notes to Introduction

1. Revised edition (South Carolina, 1970), p.155. Further references are given after quotations in the text.
2. Ramon Fernandez, Messages, translated by Montgomery Belgion (London, 1927), p.7. Further references are given after quotations in the text.
3. The First Collected Edition of the Works of Oscar Wilde (London, 1908-22, reprinted 1969), Reviews, pp.482-3.
4. The Aesthetes: A Source Book, edited by Ian Small (London, 1979), p.xii. Two Friends: John Gray and André Raffalovich, edited by Fr. Brocard Sewell (London, 1963), p.4.
5. The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde, ed. by Richard Ellmann (London, 1970), p.319.
6. L'Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé (Paris, 1961), p.24.
7. Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1953), p.556. Amongst Auerbach's 'multiplex data', however, the concept of a 'reality' relative to different cultures and periods was significantly absent. As Erich Kahler has noted, in Mimesis Auerbach 'makes a fundamental error in assuming that reality is a stable thing, always the same for all ages and persons, and that different writers have merely approached it in different ways. In fact, the reality of any given period is the product of struggling and advancing consciousness' (The Inward Turn of Narrative, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (Princeton, Bollinger Series, LXXXIII, 1973), p.6, n.1). I have tried to avoid this error in the following discussion of the texts.
8. Gaëtan Picon, L'Ecrivain et son ombre (Paris, 1953), p.31, my translation.
9. The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition, (London, 1977), p.69.
10. Jean-Pierre Richard, 'Quelques aspects nouveaux de la critique littéraire en France', Filologia Moderna, 1 (abril, 1961), p.3, my translation.

In that every willing is self-willing, Being is eminently characterized by 'coming toward itself' whose real essence is attained in reason as selfhood.

— Martin Heidegger, 'Metaphysics as History of Being', in The End of Philosophy, translated by Joan Stambaugh (London, 1975), p.48.

i. Oscar Wilde's Criticism: The Freedom to Become

The following discussion of Wilde's criticism does not deal with his critical oeuvre in a systematic manner, chronological or by genre. This approach is determined partly by the varied forms of Wilde's criticism, and his repetition of key ideas in most of his critical works; and partly by my aim to trace the model that is the basis of Wilde's critical method. It is not necessary or even desirable to examine all these works - dialogues, essays, reviews, prefaces, letters, and the like - to gain knowledge of 'the body of ideas' that constitute the 'philosophic substructure' of the oeuvre. It is part of this section's task to prove that there is indeed a coherent critical stance - albeit one that changes in certain aspects - in Wilde's criticism and that its substructure consists of a quite definitive model of selfhood which deeply influences it. One can, of course, take issue with many of Wilde's local judgments, but to do so here would not further the argument, nor would it be particularly enlightening. Many a wise critic has written badly on occasion: when did a foolish critic write well? Wilde was not a foolish or a trivial critic - he deliberately played the fool.

The point at which the 'philosophic substructure' is made most manifest is in the diversity of forms that his criticism takes, and it is to these forms that we must first turn. Such diversity is not merely the result of scattered and sporadic critical kit-kats, but is a deliberate decision on Wilde's part to avoid constructing a critical system. Wilde took his cue from his cultural environment. Throughout his life, he waged unceasing war on what he regarded as the stupidity and narrow-mindedness of the society around him - Philistinism was 'that side of man's nature not illumined by the imagination'¹ - and his criticism in

particular is a record of his campaigns. The plangent refrain to De Profundis declares it: 'the supreme vice is shallowness. What-ever is realized is right'.² For Wilde, the degree to which we apprehended the essential 'rightness' of all experience depended on how finely developed were our aesthetic and critical faculties of taste and discrimination. But one cannot 'teach' taste overtly; one must literally subvert the reader or listener into the Good. As Gilbert declares in 'The Critic as Artist', "'don't degrade me into the position of giving you useful information. Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught'".³ The maieutic method is indispensable to Wilde's critical forms, and the view of selfhood embodied in his critical method. It manifests itself in casual dialogue, in subversive reviews, and occasional essays whose subjects are never quite what they first appear to be. Above all, the maieutic method manifests itself in paradox that may appear at first merely outrageous. It is a device common to all of Wilde's work. Gilbert declares

'ah! it is so easy to convert others. It is so difficult to convert oneself. To arrive at what one really believes, one must speak through lips different from one's own. To know the truth one must imagine myriads of falsehoods. For what is Truth? In matters of religion, it is simply the opinion that has survived'. (p.391)

A paradox may be generally defined as a logical contradiction arrived at through valid deductions from what may appear as non-contradictory premises. This is the common form of logical paradox - Russell's paradox, for instance. Wilde's paradoxes, however, are semantic paradoxes, in that the contradiction stems from the clash of semantic meaning. Like the above, they are statements on life and art uttered by a subject that deny the usually accepted categories of truth and falsity about reality and art. Not only in the dialogues but also in the critical prose do they depend to a significant extent on our knowledge of them being uttered by someone. In that they assume human context and temporality (in opposition to purely logical series, concerned with atemporal paradigms) they presuppose a speaker and a listener. The speaker acts, and the listener is instantaneously implicated in reaction - what has imagining falsehoods to do with the truth?

The 'conversion' paradox above is yet more peculiarly paradoxical because more dependent upon half-truths about conversion. Like Epimenides's self-referring liar paradox, it acts as a provocative sign of contradiction which stimulates the receiver to question the ontological status of the statement. Thus, Gilbert's answer to his question is not his own definition of the nature of truth, but a dismissal of the merely tepid orthodoxy of common opinion. In contrast to this non-committal attitude, art is a passion, and it is this passion that makes Wilde seek not the mockery of Pilate's question, but the mocking irony of paradox to avoid the pose of earnestness. For Wilde, earnestness betokens a writer's separation from his artefact, not his involvement: the author turns lecturer and auctioneer. "It is only an auctioneer who can equally and impartially admire all schools of Art" (p.392). Wilde points out that behind the auctioneer's partiality is a meta-criticism of experience - that of monetary value. His job is simply to represent all schools as being of the highest pecuniary value. His blatant commercialism - distancing itself from art's meaning not for purposes of communication but for money - contains no passion for art: it is Philistinism, and as such is antipathetic to both the paradoxical method such as Gilbert employs, and to art itself: "There are two ways of disliking art, Ernest. One is to dislike it. The other, to like it rationally" (p.392). Wilde is not disputing any rational basis to art. To like art rationally and commercially in this context is to lack enthusiasm - in the word's etymological sense - and dedication to art. The Philistine is doomed to repeat mechanically the indecisive act of Pilate in his repression of art and of those around him.

The importance of being witty sums up one aspect of modern art, as Wilde understood it. The fine arts, for instance, can be too intelligible, addressing the spectator too obviously, and lessening their effect on him - or even changing it altogether - by the solemn availability of their signs. They may take themselves too seriously, setting themselves apart from the viewer, defining, delimiting his own and their narrow boundaries to paint and wood and canvas on the one hand, and a literally dis-passionate response on the other. Narrative painting embodied all these faults for Wilde - "indeed, pictures of this kind are far too intelligible. As a class, they rank with illustrations, and even considered from

this point of view are failures, as they do not stir the imagination, but set definite bounds to it" (p.369). This applies to all the arts, but particularly to pictorial, representative art whose intelligibility may be fatal to its ultimate effect -

'For, when the ideal is realized, it is robbed of its wonder and its mystery, and becomes simply a new starting point for an ideal that is other than itself. This is the reason why music is the perfect type of art. Music can never reveal its ultimate secret. This, also, is the explanation of the value of limitations in art'. (p.370)

Such intelligibility in criticism, too, may undercut an author's originally intended meaning. Of the Browning Society ('like the theologians of the Broad Church Party'), Gilbert declares "where one had hoped that Browning was a mystic, they have sought to show that he was simply inarticulate. Where one had fancied that he had something to conceal, they have proved that he had but little to reveal" (p.344).

It is a danger open to all who encounter art at any level, and a test of sensitivity. In explaining the poetry in other words, the Browning Society, according to Gilbert, have explicated the poetry away. They had not apprehended the poetry as poetry but had sought to explain poetry as content and disposable form. To deter such a reductive, miming attitude, therefore, Wilde advocates instead of a self-destructive intelligibility, a form which ostensibly conceals its meaning, which refuses to yield coherent, serious meaning without some attempt at original thought on the part of the reader. Provocative essays, outrageous prefaces, dialogue, inversion of expectation and, above all, paradox - these devices deny immediate intelligibility, thereby infusing meaning with irony. Instead of putting facile trust in the writer, we approach his meaning obliquely, and hence are led by ourselves to examine our selves almost inadvertently, as if we had caught sight of ourselves in a mirror, unexpectedly. Wilde recognized the fallen nature of language and communication, as we shall see, and his acute sense of this, together with his knowledge of the almost ineradicable Philistinism of his society, forced him to conclude that he who would criticize must protect both himself and his meaning with the traditional irony of the motley. By telling the truth in jokes, riddles, paradoxes, parables and cryptic stories the jester entertains, and may communicate his truths and his prophecies in a witty, cunningly intriguing form. This time, Troy may listen to Cassandra, because she is so flippant about her fate.

Below the seriousness underlying the mask of the jester

is yet another ironical distance. Wilde's writings do not pretend to contain ultimate truth in themselves. By openly exhibiting contradiction, they provoke the reader or listener into a re-appraisal of his own conventional attitudes, and into an examination of his self by which the reader becomes aware of the model nature of his own selfhood - that is, the extent to which the self, as its own subject, becomes itself through knowledge of its self. Thus the reader is not so much given the Delphic oracle 'Know thyself', as forced to turn Egyptologist and decipher the meaning of the signs of his literal character. The self is not the monument, but the hieroglyphs upon its surface. To know such characters we must know their relation to other characters. In order to understand the question 'Who am I' we must first answer Montaigne's question, which operates at a meta-communicational level - 'Que scay-je'?

Perhaps the basis of Wilde's whole method is that the truth about selfhood cannot be given; and those who are most sure of it frequently do not possess it; and those who are most in need of it do not want it. In the same way, 'everyone is worthy of love except he who thinks that he is'.⁴ In these cases the assumption of knowledge is the greatest obstacle to the activity of knowing, loving or criticising - 'We call ourselves a utilitarian age, and we do not know the uses of any single thing' (ibid., p.509). What Wilde must do, first and last, is to return the reader to that position of genuine Socratic ignorance where, by knowing nothing, he may honestly begin to try to know everything. To do this, Wilde adopted in his work (and more irregularly in his life) the irony of Socrates, which similarly worked within a comic personality, and only revealed his technique at any length in De Profundis, where he calls it 'Humility'. Having lost it personally in the years leading up to his trial, he regained it in prison: 'Of all things it is the strangest. One cannot give it away, and another may not give it to one. One cannot acquire it, except by surrendering everything that one has. It is only when one has lost all things, that one knows that one possesses it' (ibid., p.467).

In his work, then, the variety of forms was nearly always an attempt to make the reader question his self: 'everything must come to one out of one's own nature. There is no use in telling a person a thing that they don't feel and can't understand' (ibid., p.448). Indeed, the attempt to convert others overtly will result in the loss of the all-important faith or inwardness which one is attempting to

communicate. In La Sainte Courtisane, Honorius converts Myrrhina, but loses his own faith; and the Hermit of the prose poem 'The Teacher of Wisdom' is tested by God through his fear of losing the perfect knowledge of God if he divulges it to others. Wilde was convinced that metaphysics, dealing as it does in atemporal paradigms, could not encourage existential awareness, and, like the Canterville Ghost, he deplored '"abstract ethics"'.⁵ He would have agreed with Søren Kierkegaard's description of living by Hegel's System as trying to plan a walking-tour in Denmark with a small map of Europe. As is the case with Kierkegaard too, the forms of his art reveal the intentionality behind the mask.

Most original of the forms Wilde chose for his criticism was the dialogue. As a critical form, the dialogue was almost unique to Wilde in the late nineteenth century; but as Gilbert indicates in 'The Critic as Artist' it had a number of modern antecedents, notably Landor's Imaginary Conversations. Landor's sedate pieces however, as Wilde well knew, are no model for the sharp wit and philosophical acuity of his own dialogues. Existing as it does here between the essay and the play, exhibiting the tentative, discursive qualities of the first, and the dramatic, objectifying power of the second, the critical dialogue gave Wilde one of his most successful forms. Like the paradox, it creates a mask that stimulates curiosity. It might be said that this mask defeats attempts to attribute to Wilde himself views held by any of the characters in the dialogues. This is only partially true, however, for it is legitimate to identify Wilde's own critical stance by cross-referring to similar viewpoints held with his approval in other critical contexts. He did not use either the dialogue or the few critical essays he wrote to conduct discussions in a narrowly philosophical tenor, such as that Pater translates and reconstructs in chapter twenty-four of Marius the Epicurean. But in the dialogue Wilde had lighted on a flexible, reflexive form which fitted his wide-ranging topics of discussion, where a continuous book would have been overwhelmed by swift diversity. Such a form is evidence of Wilde's insight that criticism can provide accurately inaccurate interpretations of texts. The procedure is analogous to our use of language: words displace things and ideas, and do not merely imitate them. In the same way, criticism displaces the text, and in a sense, becomes the text. This indicates the importance criticism held for Wilde. The critical faculty was a crucial catalyst in his

view of the self; and it is this that we shall now examine.

The impression of catholicity with which one is left at the end of each dialogue is the result of the broadly-based questions that are broached at the start. Hardly any example of Wilde's criticism concerns art alone, although its ostensive subjects are literary creativity and criticism. History, philosophy, science, theology - in short the major ways of thought in the period all enter at various points in the discussion. Wilde, contrary to the aesthete image of him, analyzes the complex relations between art and life. He deals not with aesthetics alone, but goes beyond, to the motive behind aesthetics and ethics, which he locates as "that desire that we have not yet satisfied, the desire to know the connection between Beauty and Truth, and the place of Beauty in the moral and intellectual order of the Kosmos" (p.352). In so doing, he creates a meta-criticism of art, criticism and society where new patterns of experience are uncovered, and life and art are found to be, paradoxically, both structures of experience. The new definitions, breaking out of conventional meaning, are no less than a renaissance - 'that movement in which, in various ways, the human mind wins for itself a new kingdom of feeling and sensation and thought, not opposed to but only beyond and independent of the spiritual system then realized'.⁶

Similarly, Wilde's aesthetic criticism overflows the conventional limits of aesthetic enquiry into art and philosophy. In 'The Critic as Artist', Gilbert believes that Plato will be remembered as a "critic of Beauty", and suggests that by "altering the name of the sphere of his speculation we shall find a new philosophy" (p.353). For Wilde, indeed, philosophy and art were difficult to separate: 'just as it is only in art-criticism, and through it, that we can apprehend the Platonic theory of ideas, so it is only in art-criticism, and through it, that we can realize Hegel's system of contraries. The truths of metaphysics are the truths of masks' (p.432). Wilde had no patience with abstract Absolutes, but he did arrive at a form of Universal in 'The Critic as Artist' - "the Critical Spirit and the World-Spirit are one" (p.407). He does so through a radical revaluation of the term 'criticism', defined by a description of the traits a true critic will possess. The temperament of the critic is the "primary requisite for the critic". This definition befits a dialogue, but Wilde had other motives.

The basis of art lies in the self - "for there is no art where there is no style, and no style where there is no unity, and unity is of the individual" (p.356). The individual, then, provides the ground of the critical faculty. Criticism is divided into a lower and higher form. The lower is that critical effort which is part of the creative faculty: self-consciousness, "that spirit of choice, that subtle tact of omission" (p.355). The higher criticism is what really concerns Wilde, however, and his definition of it fills most of this dialogue.

The relationships between both the artist and Nature or Life, and between the critic and his object of criticism are also defined in terms of the self. In 'The Decay of Lying', Vivian defines Nature as

'our creation. It is in our brain what she quickens to life. Things are because we see them, and what we see, and how we see it, depends on the Arts that have influenced us. To look at a thing is very different from seeing a thing. One does not see anything until one sees its beauty. Then, and then only, does it come into existence'. (p.312)

Wilde exaggerates wittily when he quotes his example of the London fogs, but his basic point is an important one, and not at all restricted to the truism that fashion changing changes what we see. As one twentieth century philosopher puts it, 'the origin of the work of art - that is, the origin of both the creators and the preservers, which is to say of a people's historical existence, is art. This is so because art is by nature an origin: a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical'.⁷ Wilde divides the attention which we pay to reality as conscious and unconscious - looking and seeing - and the deliberate act of perception, 'looking', necessarily involves much more conception. The basic distinction Wilde makes here is an old one. In The Republic (VII, 523b-525b), Plato distinguishes two kinds of things in the world - those which leave the mind inactive, or give it only the pretext of an appearance of activity; and those which lead it to think consciously. The first are objects of recognition - 'that is a chair' - and the second are those things which force us to think: no longer recognizable objects but composed of, as Plato puts it, 'simultaneously contrary perceptions'. What is novel here is the relative, subjective slant Wilde gives to the distinction. Thus, he suggests that the second category of

judgments are shaped by our sense of what is good and bad in art: art therefore affects our ways of looking at reality and experience. This holds true for the artist - "no great artist ever sees things as they really are. If he did, he would cease to be an artist" (p.315). It also holds true for the spectator - "the difference between objective and subjective work is one of external form merely. It is accidental, not essential. All artistic creation is absolutely subjective. The very landscape that Corot looked at was, as he said himself, but a mood of his own mind". Gilbert's argument continues, slipping almost imperceptibly from a definition of art to one of criticism: "for out of ourselves we can never pass, nor can there be in creation what in the creator was not. Nay, I would say that the more objective a creation appears to be, the more subjective it really is" (p.389).

True criticism belongs to this latter category: ostensibly objective in character, its mask will betray the selfhood of its creator, and its form will be a living extension of criticism's mobile lineaments. It is, in fact, "the record of one's soul", and deals with "the spiritual moods and imaginative passions of the mind" (p.365). Gilbert - describing his own and Wilde's criticism - deliberately confuses reason, imagination and emotion here because the source of the highest criticism lies not merely in the critical faculty alone, but in the temperament which the critical faculty suffuses with its own qualities. Gilbert describes the effort of the critical faculty on this identification within the true critic. It will create the proper temperament by refining in us the "beauty-sense" or "aesthetic sense" which we all possess (pp.394, 370). This sense is described as that faculty "which, while accepting both reason and recognition as stages of apprehension, subordinates them both to a pure synthetic impression of the work of art as a whole" (p.370) - in short, taste. This faculty works best when applied to complex artefacts, "such modes as suggest reverie and mood, and by their imaginative beauty make all interpretations true and no interpretation final" (p.370). The criterion which works through taste, the universal behind the ordered particulars of the aesthetic sense, is the concept of Beauty - "Beauty has as many meanings as man has moods. Beauty is the symbol of symbols. Beauty reveals everything, because it expresses nothing" (p.360). And we

arrive at a sense of beauty through the imagination. Following the example of Pater, Wilde refuses to define beauty as an abstractum; but if the imagination is to apprehend Beauty, its concrete manifestations must contain those qualities which will make it an abstract universal. And here again, Wilde turns to the critical faculty, and its effect upon all other concrete particulars as they exist now, or have existed:

'it seems to me that with the development of the critical spirit we shall be able to realize, not merely our own lives, but the collective life of the race... To realize the nineteenth century, one must realize every century that has preceded it and that has contributed to its making... Do you think that it is the imagination that enables us to live these countless lives? Yes: it is the imagination; and the imagination is the result of heredity. It is simply concentrated race-experience'. (pp.382, 384)

Wilde hints here at the dialectical movement between history and the historical imagination: each changing, changes the other. Gilbert justifies this to Ernest's satisfaction by appealing to the critical spirit - namely that of historical criticism - as the catalyst. The imagination contains within itself memories and expectations which react with each other and which are constantly acted upon by the creative critical faculty. In matters of art (and for Wilde, the kingdom of art extends over a considerable area of ordinary experience) '"thought is inevitably coloured by emotion, and so is fluid rather than fixed"'(p.392).

The imagination, then, is the centre of Wilde's theory; and its activity together with the critical spirit, produces the highest criticism, which '"deals with art not as expressive but as impressive purely"'(p.366). Such criticism arises from the instantaneous fusion of the art object with the intellectual and emotional forces that constitute the faculty of taste which will react according to the presence of the principle of Beauty in the imagination. Now, unlike the general process in Symbolism, where the signs emanating from the material phenomenon are considered as correspondence to a spiritual reality or Ideal, Impressionism seeks its truth not in transcendence or spiritual Idealities, or even in the object as in itself it really is, but in the act of looking and knowing. Impressionist theories usually went no further

than stressing the purely existing qualities of things; which presented no problems when in front of the art object, but was naturally an intractable theory to handle when dealing with aesthetics or ethics in general. It is clear that Wilde presents something more than such fragmentary Impressionism, always weakest in the abstract.

And yet Wilde does not react against Impressionism as much as to accept transcendentalism wholeheartedly. The idea that art embodied a Platonic universal essence, of which it represented a form, the aim of art being to realize that essence, was anathema to him; as was the notion that there could be no coherence in any view of reality, that all was particulars without some unifying universal. In contrast to the Symbolist doctrine that the particular is all that can be articulated of the art object, Wilde posited the existence of the object for us within our joint perception-conception of it. And if Wilde's dubious conjoining of imagination and the laws of heredity was typical of contemporary Symbolist analogies made between psychic and physical processes, his subordination of these strange bedfellows to the critical faculty was unique to himself. For Wilde, the self was not determined by these twin forces; but instead could synthesize from them, by means of the critical faculty, its changing principle of Beauty. This paradoxical principle, a universal composed of its particulars, in turn alters the play of the imagination and changes the "'concentrated race-experience'" by changing critical perspectives upon that past.

Taking what he wanted from both Impressionism and Symbolism, Wilde then concentrated upon the relationship between the artist, or critic, and his subject-matter. His main theme - the temperament of the true critic and artist - was a radical departure from previous critical efforts in this area, not the less because Wilde saw that underlying all discussions of art, lay the fundamental problem of art's relationship with the rest of life and morality. Wilde identified the contemporary dilemma - of which he was soon to become its most notorious victim - as one of false premises and ignorance of the nature of art. The point was not that morality had nothing to do with art, but that to ascribe a facile moral content to an art object, or to impute or expect moral intent in an artist's work prior to experiencing it was an ignorance of what constituted art, historical and contemporary. Such a misconception arose from the dichotomy, of which Ruskin was a noted promoter, that taste, the

discriminatory sense, was essentially a moral quality. This view has a clear epistemological basis in a concept of selfhood which holds the self to be a substance in which accidents inhere; where substance is that which exists in and through itself, and accidents (however these are to be defined) those which exist in and through some other thing. Substance is unifying, underlying the changeful accidents. Such a theory of the self derives not from an analysis of the self's relationship to its self and others, but from the analysis of objects alone, and finds its locus classicus in Aristotle's Physics. This theory of selfhood lends itself readily to abstraction, transcendentalism and the monolithic enquiry of metaphysics. Wilde rejected all this that he encountered at Oxford while a student, putting forward in its place the inter-relations of taste, Beauty and the critical spirit. The forms of his criticism, as we have seen, are active elements in this project and, as we shall see, are a direct result of Wilde's model of selfhood. He saw the self as perpetually in process, dynamic in its criticism of itself and the object world and therefore always pursuing itself as the self it must become. If, au contraire, the self pursues itself as its already innate essence (substance), it does not pursue or criticize, but merely affirms. Now, to heal the false split between an aesthetic art and a moral art, to realize the self as dynamic, therefore, Wilde formed his ideal of the true critic.

Those traits that characterize him are unfairness, irrationality and insincerity; and of their opposites that Ernest forwards as a description of the true critic, Gilbert warns him that the first and third are '"at least on the border-land of morals, and the first condition of criticism is that the critic should be able to recognize that the sphere of Art and the sphere of Ethics are absolutely distinct and separate"' (p. 393). From the ensuing discussion it is clear that Gilbert refers only to conventional ethics, which is Wilde's usual meaning when he addresses himself to morals or ethics directly. The two are distinct only because, the two realms of aesthetics and ethics being contiguous, a misconception of one involves a misconception of the other. By inverting the conventional critical virtues of rationality, fairness and sincerity, Wilde attacked the conventional repressive notions of the relations between morality and art, and simultaneously outlined an alternative idea, based on the temperament of the

critic, "a temperament exquisitely susceptible to beauty, and to the various impressions that beauty gives us" (p.394). In a sincerely materialistic age, insincerity is not mere flippancy, leading as it does to the playful pluralism of multiple personalities but, in its rebellion against the status quo, a defence against materialistic insincerity. Wilde indicated this in a letter:

To the world I seem, by intention on my part, a dilettante and a dandy merely - it is not wise to show one's heart to the world - and as seriousness of manner is the disguise of the fool, folly in its exquisite modes of triviality and indifference and lack of care is the robe of the wise man. In so vulgar an age as this we all need masks.⁸

The vital bonds between Wilde's forms and the matter of his criticism are indicated here. Folly masks its wisdom; inconsequentiality masks its serious implications. As he wrote in another context, 'art is the only serious thing in the world. And the artist is the only person who is never serious'.⁹ In order for the critic to play the fool in art and in life, Wilde gives us an important re-definition - that of individualism. Wilde's theory of individualism is distinct from the two meanings of the term then current. On the one hand it served to describe the predominantly economic and political theory of the isolated, competing individual, and on the other hand it was used to describe a condition of anarchy. (Thus, in The Socialist Revolution of 1888, By an Eye Witness (London, 1884), the revolution collapses within six months and the country reverts to a state of Individualism.) Wilde's theory belongs more to a vitalist model of selfhood, where the self attains coherence within itself and society by emphasizing its own uniqueness and powers of self-determination. It was a model to be found variously in Pater, Nietzsche, Bergson and others; and its expression in new forms of narrative and criticism.

For Wilde, "self-culture is the true ideal of man", and "the development of the race depends on the development of the individual" (pp.387, 386). He saw his type of individualism as opposed to the naturally imitative instinct of life, those which Vivian despises in 'The Decay of Lying': "through [Sin's] intensified assertion of individualism it saves us from monotony of type. In its rejection of the current notions about morality,

it is one with the higher ethics". Both good and evil carry man forward in progress. As Wilde saw an aesthetic order in nature that may be apprehended by the developed mind, so he was optimistic that such development takes place within history: 'man will develop Individualism out of himself. Man is now so developing Individualism. To ask whether Individualism is practical is like asking whether Evolution is practical' (p.284).

Wilde's attempt to create a new structure for living, based on his novel perception of reality and his epistemological assumptions has as its critical method the eradication by inversion of conventional values. This is particularly evident in his essay 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'. Here, the subjects of the dialogues - the critical faculty, the principle of Beauty and the temperament of the true artist-critic - are applied to a larger canvas. Wilde's method in art becomes a life-style in this essay - 'what is true about Art is true about Life' (p.285) - and the result is the formation of a 'higher ethics', one which arises from the aesthetic realm. Thus, 'all the results of the mistakes of governments are quite admirable' (p.284); and 'where [Individualism] is not expressed, it is a case of artificially-arrested growth, or of disease, or of death' (p.285). So anarchic an Individualism as Wilde's would have been seen by contemporaries as merely another manifestation of decadence; but here, it is the repressive society that is accused by Wilde of such a death-wish. And if society itself is decadent, it is not because it has not asked 'What do I know', but because it has asked 'How much do I need to know?' Knowledge, like the self, is thereby hypostatized, becomes an entity. Wilde realized that such reification leads to a disavowal of personal responsibility for self-knowledge and therefore a denial of responsibility for the self's actions. It is an infinite regress, for the lack of criticism is founded upon the false certainty of the static substantiality of selfhood - which is based on a lack of the critical spirit in life as well as in art - that is indicated by the distortion of language. Hence the critical inversions of conventional notions, equivalent in their effect to the inconsequential forms, the witty paradox: 'selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking others to live as one wishes to live'. 'Affectation' becomes 'acting in a perfectly natural manner'. And '"there is no

sin except stupidity" (pp.285, 406). Wilde indicates the heart of his method here - 'it has been pointed out that one of the results of the extraordinary tyranny of authority is that words are absolutely distorted from their proper and simple meaning, and are used to express the obverse of their right signification' (p.285).

In this startlingly modern notion of the fallen nature of language - a notion that lends authority to his formal strategies - Wilde reveals the necessity of art and a critical temperament to life. In a repressive society, the model nature of selfhood can only be articulated by recourse to paradox and irony, guerilla tactics akin to the Hindu dhoza which 'stresses the property of speech by which it communicates what it does not actually say'.¹⁰ His remark that it is '"far more difficult to talk about a thing than to do it"' (p.381) takes on a new dimension under conditions where the '"security of society lies in custom and unconscious instinct, and the basis of the stability of society, as a healthy organism, is the complete absence of any intelligence amongst its members"' (p.388). Health is used ironically of course, referring to conventional notions on these matters; and the distance created by the irony is the measure of the truth of that '"security"' in a repressive society. And if the true critic finds his true unity through '"constant change and through constant change alone"' (p.393), Wilde sees in this changefulness a unity in flux that is not a merely facile unity-in-difference: 'The systems that fail are those that rely on the permanency of human nature, and not on its growth and development' (p.284). His ideal temperament, which contains the critical spirit, is contemplative - '"the life that has for its aim not doing but being, and not being merely, but becoming"' (p.384). Paradoxically, it finds its true still point not by denying the Heraclitean and evolutionary flux, but by simply altering the self's perspective on its conditions.

Such self-absorption as Wilde advocates may seem solipsistic at first; but when one sees how central it is to his theory of the motives behind aesthetics, then it becomes clear just how social Wilde's ideal is - '"if you wish to understand others you must intensify your own individualism"' (p.373), but '"to know anything about oneself, one must know all about others"' (p.382). Wilde's

principal method of attaining freedom, equality and knowledge of others in society was through sympathy - 'when man has realized Individualism, he will also realize sympathy and exercise it freely and spontaneously' (p.285). This sympathy is not the emotional sympathy deplored by Gilbert; nor is it sympathy with suffering alone, but also with joy. Again, Wilde inverts what was hitherto regarded as a negative emotion, a mourning, into a positive attitude, a celebration: 'one should sympathize with the entirety of life, not with life's sores and maladies merely' (p.286). The mannered glibness of the epithet 'sores and maladies' gives warning of a shortcoming in Wilde's view of the self at this juncture in his career. Sympathy is seen in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' as a negative sympathy, as a lower form of sympathy entailing 'a certain element of terror for our own safety', and 'tainted with egotism' (p.286). Wilde is here unable to envisage a sympathy that does not take root in self-assertion, perhaps because at this point he is unable to face the ugly particulars of real suffering - a symptomatic blindness that was to have disastrous personal consequences. Wilde is right of course - sympathy is often the facade of self-interest, as was the case with charity given to the East End poor in place of effective legislation to change their repressed condition.

But Wilde is too abstractly theoretical here: taken to its logical extreme, his argument advocates the same exaggerated individualism that Bernard Bosanquet advocated - a position '"which would compel one to disapprove, e.g., of Old Age Pensions"'.¹¹ Here, however, Wilde is specifically concerned to criticize that aspect of the ideal of self-sacrifice he explicitly repudiates on a number of occasions as being harmful to self-development. The point was made succinctly in an aphorism by F.H. Bradley, where he highlighted the complex relations between self-sacrifice and self-assertion which, as in the case of negative sympathy, is ignored by conventional Philistine and egoistic morality: 'self-sacrifice is too often the "great sacrifice" of the trade, the giving cheap what is worth nothing. To know what one wants, and to scruple at no means that will get it, may be a harder self-surrender'.¹² Thus, egotism, the diametric opposite of Individualism in Wilde's schema, is the desire to make others in one's own image, to deny their unique individuality, and to establish around oneself 'an absolute uniformity of type' (p.285).

Under the influence of Individualism, then, society will not attempt to form such rigidly systematic universals, for these universals belong to that traditional type of system where particulars are always threatening to fragment the essential unity of experience, and which necessitated the objective model of the self as substance and accidents. They will be unnecessary in a world where 'perfect harmony' will reign. Under such paradisiacal conditions, universals will be redundant because particulars will themselves cohere as reality. In that universals are a correlate in the Hegelian system for the authority of the state, they will, too, be unacceptable in a society where man will act not in accordance with the dictates of authority, but in harmony with his Individualism, which 'comes naturally and inevitably out of man', and which produces 'as many perfections as their [sic] are imperfect men' (pp. 284, 266). Such a view of man's nature completely avoids the age-old issue of the will of the state opposed to the will of the individual; but only because Wilde believed that this problem could only be resolved if man's nature were changed. He criticizes this dualism, therefore, at a more fundamental, and self-confessedly utopian, level.

The dynamic freedom that Wilde sees as the core of Individualism he returns to in De Profundis, seeing it as the existential freedom of the self to make and remake itself, and thereby its view of reality. Reality is ordered, implicitly; but this coherence can only be effectual when seen as such. In re-appraising his model of selfhood, Wilde takes up the dialogic form in De Profundis, this time in the form of a letter to Alfred Douglas. The dialogue here takes place between Wilde and Douglas, with Wilde explaining to the listener Douglas's motives, his actions, their consequences; interpreting his actions, and even anticipating his protestations. On Wilde's side and on a more fundamental narrative level, the listener is given an account of the relationship of art to life and past to present which will absorb the recent disasters, and allow Wilde to make sense out of what must have seemed so crushing and senseless. Wilde's trial and execution (he refers to himself in one letter as having died in prison), provide the hardest test for that faculty which his theories depended upon so heavily, the critical, interpretative faculty, which renews the self's sense of its own selfhood in its ceaseless re-interpretation and redaction of the self to a redintegratio in statuum pristinum.

The letter was, in one way, Wilde's attempt to regain the world of bright particulars that he had lost. It is a flawed document, mainly because of Wilde's attitudinising. Its harsh candour, too, may seem to deny it the distancing, provoking irony so essential to his criticism, as we have seen - but only from Douglas's point of view, not the reader's. Wilde's intentions in writing the letter are clearly set out in a letter to Robert Ross: his letter is a 'psychological explanation' of his conduct, written not to Douglas alone, but posterity.¹³ However, as Wilde knew well enough, 'To evoke posterity/Is to weep on your own grave,/Ventriloquising for the unborn'.¹⁴ In addressing the letter to Douglas, and involving him as much as possible in the dialogue, Wilde cunningly makes us all voyeurs of a private conversation, where we implicitly accept what is said as truth, because the sense of an ordered and coherent perspective is strongly present in the first person narrative and shockingly confessional tone of voice. Wilde could declare of De Profundis that 'there is in it nothing of rhetoric'.¹⁵ Artistry, though, as he recognized in the letter itself, is necessary to convey exactitude of impression and meaning. Wilde was never one of those to confuse intention with artefact - 'whatever is first in feeling comes always last in form'(p.503). To believe otherwise is to be sentimental, and therefore cynical.

It is the interpretative faculty that gives continuity to past and present in the letter. This faculty reacts to the smallest accidentals of style in life and in art, so revealing character - interpretation dovetails snugly into reality, and Prince Fleur-de-Lys stands condemned. It provides an answer to one of the great questions of the age - 'to be entirely free, and at the same time entirely dominated by law, is the eternal paradox of human life that we realize at every moment'(p.443). For Wilde, this paradox was an immutable, ineluctable condition of existence. What interested him - and more than ever in his prisoned existence - was how one may achieve the desired measure of autonomy within its movement by the dialectical play between the re-organizing critical faculty and the principle of Beauty. To take this point of view is then to see that changefulness is hope, because in such ceaseless flux lies the potential for interpretation. In 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', Wilde pointed out that only a repressive or an ideal

society desired stasis. Shifting this argument to time in De Profundis, Wilde created the conditions under which the past could be re-interpreted, the future re-cast, the present transformed.

His starting-point, as always, is his faith in the totality of experience, and he re-affirms this in terms that recall 'The Soul of Man', with its stress on being as opposed to doing or having: 'to reject one's own experiences is to arrest one's own development'(p.469). He attributes his fall to a loss of Individualism, in which state he 'forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character'(p.466) - in other words he came to misunderstand and forget in his own life, the existential nature of experience, that one must take personal responsibility for every personal act. In terms that deal not with faculties or symbols but with attitude, (and thereby give Wilde's strictures the status of a meta-criticism of experience), he presents his despair at what seems the invasion of senseless chaos into his life, the consequent threat of loss of identity, its fear and trembling; and his state of mind leading up to the moment of illumination and conversion. Referring to his sufferings he wrote 'I could not bear them to be without meaning. Now I find hidden away in my nature something that tells me that nothing in the whole world is meaningless, and suffering least of all'(p.467).

The contrast between the menacing chaos of recent years and the cohesive unity Wilde desires to regain is presented in images of flux and stasis. As we have seen, changefulness is hope. Wilde envisages Christ, the letter's figure of rebirth and regeneration, as feeling that 'life was changeful, fluid, active, and that to allow it to be stereotyped into any form was death'(p.485). In contrast to this ideal, prison life is a life-in-death, a hypostatized existence which parodies the ideal existences of figures in paintings or in marble upon which Gilbert lyricises in 'The Critic as Artist' (pp.362-63). In prison 'time itself does not progress. It revolves. It seems to circle round one centre of pain... this immobile quality, that makes each dreadful day in the very minutest detail like its brother, seems to communicate itself to those external forces the very essence of whose existence is ceaseless change' (pp.457-8). The image has its analogue in Wilde's conviction that 'all repetition

is anti-spiritual'(p.483). Wilde finds his solution to such paralyzing immobility in his interpretation of Christ. Speaking of Christ and contemporary philistine Jews, Wilde declares, 'in opposition to their tithing of each separate day into its fixed routine of prescribed duties... he preached the enormous importance of living completely for the moment'(p.486). In his opposition to materialism, superficial respectability, orthodoxy and 'ostentatious public charities', Wilde's anarchic Christ embodies his ideal of imagination: 'I see this continual assertion of the imagination as the basis of all spiritual and material life, I see also that to Christ imagination was simply a form of Love'(p.484). Lack of imagination is described as shallowness: it is lack of the aesthetic sense, and therefore of any principle of Beauty. It is the inability to feel sympathy, an aversion towards the process of self-knowledge, and, finally, the terrible inability to love.

The figure of Christ symbolizes and furthers Wilde's previous ideas on the organic creative power of the imagination. Christ is the first 'supreme Individualist', whose challenge to people is the existential one to '"possess their souls" before they die'(p.479). His command to live for others Wilde interprets as an embodiment of his own conviction of the unity of humanity: "whatever happens to another happens to oneself"(p.477). Christ tries to erase the boundaries between men's lives: 'by this means he gave to man an extended, a Titan personality. Since his coming the history of each separate individual is, or can be made, the history of the world'(p.480). With some support from the Idealist notion of the self perpetually attempting to realize itself as one with the World Spirit, Wilde grafts his interpretation of Christ onto his theory of heredity and imagination, in doing so accepting a theory of sympathy which contradicts his dismissal in 'The Soul of Man' of sympathy with pain and suffering. As Wilde now puts it, 'imagination is the quality that enables one to see things and people in their real as in their ideal relations'(p.508).

Christ is the key that unlocks Wilde's nightmarish, hypostatized prison: 'if he is "of imagination all compact", the world itself is of the same substance'. The context of the Shakespearian quotation - A Midsummer Night's Dream, V,i,7 - is apt, pointing ironically as it does to the solipsistic potential in imagination. For Wilde now, experience is reality, and therefore 'it is in the

brain that the poppy is red, that the apple is odorous, that the skylark sings'(p.483). Wilde is able now to re-affirm that nature of percept and concept in a positive way, one that will lead out of the prison of isolation, out of the depths and into a vision of social man in 'perfect harmony': 'the moment of repentance is the moment of initiation. More than that. It is the means by which one alters one's past'(p.487). This moment is nothing less than a radical re-interpretation of past events, whereby what had been senseless, incoherent, is seen as occurring in a meaningful seriatum. Above all, the self no longer rebels, but accepts and re-integrates these experiences. Couching his explanation in Idealist terms, Wilde says 'things in themselves are of little importance, have indeed - let us for once thank Metaphysics for something that she has taught us - no real existence. The spirit alone is of importance'(p.488). The point of view, the attitude adopted towards events - whether London fogs or sexual acts - is what governs response and action. When in the dock, Wilde saw then 'that what is said of a man is nothing. The point is, who says it'(p.502). On one level, Wilde was not being daringly decadent when he declared of Lockwood's accusations, "how splendid it would be, if I was saying all this about myself!"(p.502). De Profundis is proof of his seriousness. Wilde is merely applying to himself here the paradoxical logic upon which the form and style of his best criticism was based - that the moment of illumination, as of repentance, must arise from the self, and cannot be drawn out directly by any external agency. This applies to all manner of conduct and occasions: 'the martyr in his "shirt of flame" may be looking on the face of God, but to him who is piling the faggots... the whole scene is no more than the slaying of an ox is to the butcher'(p.504). Such conditions of time and space are 'merely accidental conditions of Thought. The Imagination can transcend them, and move in a free sphere of ideal existences'(p.511).

Using his own case as an example, Wilde here confirms the course he had plotted in his critical dialogues and in 'The Soul of Man': he triumphs over his personal catastrophe, and makes real that free unfolding, the dynamic continuity of self and experience, he so relied upon. But, as the subsequent years and letters reveal, Wilde found it impossible to put his theory into practice. The moment of conversion

was the furthest distance he travelled as a convert (literally, as at his death-bed conversion to Catholicism), although he believed that conversion is continually affirmed or denied throughout life. His later position is summed up in a passage of a letter written to Robert Ross from the bitterness of his exile in France: 'I must reconsider my position, as I cannot go on living here as I am doing, though I know that there is no such thing as changing one's life: one merely wanders round and round within the circle of one's own personality' (p.671). The image of the circular, revolving self in 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol', and the immobile self of De Profundis never ceased to haunt Wilde. It was anathema to the self that had freed itself from reification and defined itself in terms of pure process, and Wilde's acknowledgment of the danger of the circular self appears everywhere in his oeuvre.

In his criticism, the whole theory of Individualism, so anti-social at first sight, was really a social hypothesis as well as a model of selfhood and, like the dialogue, required another and others for its existence. To say, as Wilde does openly, that its ideas are impracticable and therefore ought not to be put into practice, does not condemn it. Wilde, in fact, is uninterested in practicals, either Socialism or science. What interests him after all, is the vision of the soul of man under Individualism which, on a personal level, is what lies at the heart of De Profundis. It is utopian, one of the many late century visions and theories from Morris to Bosanquet; but one peculiarly seductive to the artist in Wilde because of its proximity and debts to aesthetics. The link between form and matter, critic and criticism, art and selfhood was a crucial one for Wilde - 'the highest, as the lowest, form of criticism is a mode of autobiography' (Ellmann, p.235). From the interaction between a dynamic model of selfhood and these critical insights - each feeding the other - arose Wilde's awareness of the necessity to speak in veiling and provoking forms. Where contemporaries - T.H. Green, for example - were often concerned to establish a network of ethical relations in society over the existing establishment, Wilde attempted to break up conventional aesthetic and ethical values, seeing them as repressive and restrictive. Writing from this critical position, Wilde adopted styles and forms that link his criticism formally with that of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. He does not share these

philosophers's deep pessimism about the human condition, of course. He thought that when man was free of society's shackles, relations would grow spontaneously from his new selfhood, and become the organic Individuality he envisages in De Profundis. Such a condition can only come about when we see that the coherent particulars of reality 'are in their essence what we choose to make them. A thing is, according to the mode in which one looks at it' (p.511). The supreme optimism of Wilde on paper and in life, in method and conclusions, and above all in his criticism, is a measure of his conviction that in its perpetual becoming, the self has myriad opportunities to take its own destiny in its hand - if it could only see it as such. It may become what it will, if it would only know what it really wills. Such an attitude in the present moment, ever poised between a past that has been and may be shaped and a future full of possibility, where the self may feel itself self-determined, still full of potential, is an exhilarating one. The moment of conversion, of 'wild surmise', was a delectable one for Wilde, which he was loth to part from. This had further consequences for his art, particularly The Picture of Dorian Gray, which will be investigated in chapter three.

ii. Tess of the D'Urbervilles: The Limits to Becoming

'Human love is a subjective thing - the essence itself of man, as that great thinker Spinoza says... it is joy accompanied by an idea which we project against any suitable object in the line of our vision, just as the rainbow iris is projected against an oak, ash or elm tree indifferently. So that if any other young lady had appeared instead of the one who did appear, I should have felt the same interest in her, and have quoted precisely the same lines from Shelley about her, as about this one I saw. Such miserable creatures of circumstances are we all!'¹⁶

This passage from The Woodlanders neatly catches one of Hardy's concerns in his later novels - that of how to define the nature of experience, and to portray a selfhood moving, in motivation and action, through '"this hobble of being alive"'.¹⁷ Fitzpiers's words are the extremity of Shelleyan solipsism, and Hardy never espoused such a view himself. Nevertheless, what is interesting

here is that the character should start from a 'subjective' position - one where a person controls his view of reality - and end by deploring how humankind - now become '"such miserable creatures of circumstance"' - is dependent upon the conditions of reality external to itself.

The character of Tess is a good example of the type of problems Hardy saw in his model of the self, and of the solutions he adopted. Tess is the protagonist of the novel, and the omniscient narrator follows her through the circumstances and events of his life. The narrator is sympathetic towards her at all points, and what is perhaps Tess's only real fault of character - her lack of will-power in emotional crises - is never explicitly stated. At times the narrator's sympathetic omniscience breaks its traditional bounds, and we appear to see objects and events through Tess's eyes. The narrative, however, never sustains this curious intrusion into the smooth texture of the narrative, and soon returns to the conventions of a pseudo-objective narration. Chief amongst these devices, and particularly troublesome in Tess, is that of what appears at first as authorial comment. This appears most often in comparisons of Tess's true character and the 'world's opinion' of it, and most often in regard to the birth and short life of her illegitimate baby. Tess shuns society at large, preferring to walk about the countryside after dark. Hardy has previously described her as being at one with nature; now he reverses the process: 'at times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till they seemed a part of her own story. Rather they became a part of it; for the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were'(p.114).¹⁸ In the next chapter, Hardy defines her existence further - 'she was not an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensations, to anybody but herself. To all humankind besides Tess was only a passing thought' (p.119). If all that exists may only exist as appearances, then what counts most of all for us, in the natural as in the social sphere, is the effect of our actions upon those appearances, and their consequent reactions. And if the world is a 'psychological phenomenon' and things are as they are seen, then everything that Tess feels and thinks must come from, and be, her own view of things. A contradiction appears when Hardy attributes Tess's misery not,

as we might expect, to her view of things, but to her 'conventional aspect'. He imagines Tess living on a desert island, and asks if, separated from frowning conventionalities, she would have been as unhappy as she was at Marlott. He answers, 'Not greatly... Most of the misery had been generated by her conventional aspect, and not by her innate sensations' (pp.119-20). The point Hardy is making here is clear. Tess is affected by her circumstances: her misery is created by society's disapprobation of her past actions. But whether or not her misery is artificially created or is in some sense 'natural', Tess has it within her power - if, indeed, the world is a 'psychological phenomenon' - to change her miserable state. She has the freedom to see things differently, as Wilde indicated. The point is an important one, for it contradicts Hardy's general principle that circumstances create the individual - often reducing him or her to a '"miserable creature"' - and that we are powerless in the rush of a blindly deterministic flux - what Hardy termed the unconscious Immanent Will. Those same feelings of shame which make Tess appear to herself as a 'figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence' (p.114) are imposed upon herself by her self, and can be erased by the same self. Her will is free.

The contradiction exists here not because of any misapprehension on Hardy's part of the nature of social relations, but because of the exigencies of a narrator who can stand outside of the action wherein character is formed and subjective viewpoints discovered, and emphasize those aspects of action and character to which the author assents. This narrative device is of course a traditional one in the Victorian novel, one of the privileges of narratorial omniscience. In Hardy's novels, however, the omnipresence of the narrator, particularly in tone, is such that the narrator is felt by the reader to take on the form of an evanescent character who exists within the action of the novel, and who reacts, sometimes quite openly, to the other characters: 'then [Tess] ... poured forth from the bottom of her heart the thanksgiving that follows, uttering it boldly and triumphantly in the stopt-diapason note which her voice acquired when her heart was in her speech, and which will never be forgotten by those who knew her' (p.123, my underlining). This statement, placing the narrator in the room with Tess and her brothers and sisters, is merely the extremity of a pervasive tone

of narratorial voice, by which means Hardy himself observes from within the novel.¹⁹

But the Hardy who observes silently in the novel, and whose presence we as readers are made more or less aware of, does not account for the entirety of the narratorial voice. After all, the book is a novel, not an autobiography. A more fundamental part of the text is the wholly neutral telling of the story. This is made manifest to the reader not as a character, or even a tone of voice, but as a quality, an awareness on the reader's part (which precedes his awareness of the narrator as observer) of being told a tale. This quality is the sum of all the assumptions and presuppositions that accompany the complex attitude of mind in reading a novel, and which the novel itself will set in motion. Most relevant among these for our purposes here is the consciousness of reading a work of fiction that has been created by a certain Thomas Hardy (with all that that name entails for us) - in other words, our awareness that the text has a definite genesis, a source of authority, in that word's literal meaning.

There is, then, a dual narrator in Tess, comprised of an observer and a more 'fundamental narrator'. The latter is always present, consisting as it does, primarily of the reader's consciousness of the novel as a novel. The observer is a more flitting presence, but when he appears, a more marked feature of the narratorial voice. He wants nothing more than to watch, unobserved, from the shadows; he is passive; outside of social interchange, he is also outside of social, historical change. He stands on the Archimedean fulcrum, a continuous present without time yet inside the novel, from which he watches the known future deflected into the known past. He tells a story which he implies has already happened, is now history, and fixed. In such security of knowledge he does not feel Tess's fear at the thought of time's slow length, its threatening otherness:

'the trees have inquisitive eyes, haven't they? - that is, seem as if they had. And the river says, - "Why do ye trouble me with your looks?" And you seem to see numbers of to-morrows just all in a line, the first of them the biggest and clearest, the others getting smaller and smaller as they stand farther away; but they all seem very fierce and cruel and as if they said, "I'm coming! Beware of me! Beware of me!"' (pp.151-2)

Nor is he affected by what she sees as the condition of her temporal existence:

'what's the use of learning that I am one of a long row only - finding out that there is set down in some old book somebody just like me, and to know that I shall only act her part; making me sad, that's all. The best is not to remember that your nature and your past doings have been just like thousands' and thousands', and that your coming life and doings'll be like thousands' and thousands''. (pp.153-4)

The other part of the narratorial voice, however, is not a character who watches, but the quality of cognition; the onward movement of the narrative. It does not so much record as tell directly to the reader, and it works inside two inter-related time-schemes, that of the reader's awareness of his time as he is reading, and the time of the novel's events and actions. Existing in time, mediate between reader and text, it cannot know the future, for it is concerned to tell the story, and its function lies in being the cutting edge between past and future.

What we have here, then, is not only a dual but also a dualistic narrator. The two elements of the narratorial voice conflict with one another in that they possess antithetical qualities. However, they need not be a regressive element in the novel - indeed, far from this, they are a source of much of the novel's powerful appeal. Their dualistic conflict is, in effect, an oscillation that knits the tone inextricably to the tale. The movement is deceptively simple, and depends upon a simultaneous awareness in the author of how the two may be balanced. The observer is almost a character, and has an identifiable presence in the novel, while remaining without the circle of characters proper. The fundamental narrator is the reader's awareness of the story told him by the author. The observer will not take responsibility for the telling of the story, which the fundamental narrator undertakes. This fundamental narrator, of course, is a property common to nearly all works of fiction, but its function in Hardy's novels, particularly Tess, is isolated and exaggerated precisely because the observer, with its antithetical qualities, is so prominent in the novel's texture.

The use of such a dual narrator may be seen more clearly in autobiography, where the self is its own subject. Edmund Gosse's

Father and Son is one such autobiography and it is all the more interesting because Gosse attempts to deny his true subject, his self. Gosse declares his book to be 'the record of a struggle between two temperaments, two consciences and almost two epochs'.²⁰ The two temperaments may also refer, however, not only to son and father, but to the double temperament of the son: when he was six there came to him 'the consciousness of self, as a force and a companion' (p.21). But it also refers to the two Edmund Gosses that the book contains - the younger and elder. By claiming in the Preface that the book was a 'document', and 'scrupulously true' (at one point specifically denying it the title of autobiography - see p.151), Gosse was attempting to deny the genesis of the text, his elder self. For the text comprises not merely father and son, but also the writer, the **elder** Edmund, the synthesis of the father and son, whose dualistic antagonism is mirrored within the son. Gosse would prefer the confession to be a texte trouvé, anonymous (as it was originally published). The elder self, however, realizes itself in the thematic interplay of the text, in spite of itself. It may have done so unconsciously precisely because Gosse would make no attempt to explore it consciously, or deliberately embody it in his art. Certainly it lends the power that the book holds, and which Gosse hardly achieved anywhere else. This compelling power lies almost totally in the fact that the book's centre is not the gradual estrangement of father and son, two cultures, etc., but the son's baffled agony of being pulled two ways, his dual loyalties - as they are remembered and interpreted by the elder self. Thus there is a matroshka-doll structure which is an important part of the book's form, indeed essential to it. We, the reader, look at an old Gosse looking back to a young Gosse, who watches and is watched by, his father.

While Gosse was unaware of the workings of the voyeurism that lent his autobiographical novel such poignancy, Hardy was well aware of its power, and also its dangers. Splitting the narrative voice as he did was a device by which he gained its advantages, while skirting its pitfalls. The observer narrator would seek to turn the text into a 'document', in Gosse's terms, while the fundamental narrator counteracts this by insisting upon a personal responsibility within the text for its meaning. This amounts

to a recognition that meaning is conferred by the self, and thereby affected by the self's private dreams and $\alpha\gamma\omega\nu$. The observer narrator, however, does not prefer to think of such responsibility; and as a substitute for the fundamental narrator's assertion of responsibility, it considers meaning not as originating in the self, but as immanent in things. And if meaning is immanent in nature, then it must reside purely in the history of natural objects. To the observer, things are meaningless until they have acquired human meaning and value, until a consciousness cognizes through recognition. Of course, our capacity to resist the world's strangeness, its otherness, resides in our specific history and personality; but the observer's need for security is neurotic: he is reassured not by the gatepost itself, its substance, form and function (which is dynamic, not static, history), but by the glossy patch on it. Landscape takes on an almost obsessional one-to-one-relationship with the real England, and objects become metamorphosed - 'the aged and lichened brick gables breathed forth "Stay!" The windows smiled, the door coaxed and beckoned, the creeper blushed confederacy' (p.183).

But the book's most memorable scenes occur where the dual narrator conflicts with itself. One such scene is that of the consequence of Tess relating the story of her past to Angel. The room's objects are described as if the observer were watching the very tenor of Tess's thoughts. What is described is what he most dreads -

the fire in the grate looked impish - demoniacally funny, as if it did not care in the least about her strait. The fender grinned idly, as if it too did not care. The light from the water-bottle were merely engaged in a chromatic problem. All material objects around announced their irresponsibility with terrible iteration. And yet nothing had changed since the moments when he had been kissing her; or rather, nothing in the substance of things. But the essence of things had changed. (p.254)

What Tess feels here is none other than the conflict generated between the two elements of the narrative voice. She can be acutely aware - as the other quotations above reveal also - of objects existing in a universe where they are perpetually alienating and threatening in themselves. At times of crises the latent dread of the observer rises to the surface of the text, no longer a poignant

retrospection but the sickening anxiety that paralyzes the will to confer meaning on the world. The 'essence of things' had changed not because the things themselves had changed, but because the relationship to them had altered radically. The source of this feeling is vindicated by the overpowering voyeurism - we see into Tess's very heart, Tess's *ess-ness*, her *οὐσία* - which temporarily eclipses the fundamental narrator. Consequently, the self no longer confers meaning upon reality, but projects its own private, fearful *état d'âme* onto the mirror of nature. Angel, too, feels this sudden loss of purposive will-to-meaning: arising next morning he is confronted by 'articles of furniture, with their eternal look of not being able to help it, their intolerable inquiry what was to be done?' (p.262) And Tess at Sandbourne, that unreal place, is 'like a corpse upon the current... dissociated from its living will' (p.401). Once again, the sense of the observer's presence dims that of the responsible, fundamental narrator - 'they stood fixed, their baffled hearts looking out of their eyes with a joylessness pitiful to see. Both seemed to implore something to shelter them from reality' (p.401).

Such scenes, then, are the outcome on the narratorial level of a drastic shift towards the observer in the perpetual, finely balanced conflict between the fundamental narrator and the observer. These moments indicate part of the solution to the problem we began with - namely, if the world is our idea (to couch it in Schopenhauerian terms), why is the destiny of the characters so determined, their freewill so restricted? This is the result of the type of narrator which Hardy evolved, and which, because of its marked dualism, plays a greater role than is usual for the third person narrator within the novel's structures; thus determining its tone to a large extent by means not at first apparent to the reader. But one must go further and ask why Hardy developed this narrator. The question may appear circular - he adopted this narrator because he had a deterministic point of view in life. This is true, of course, but Hardy's temperamental choice of narrator affected other areas of his art, notably that of characterization.

For a writer who insisted almost as repeatedly as Proust upon the subjective nature of love and experience tout court, Hardy's characterization is odd in that he never created an overtly

subjective character, one who plunges into the interior consciousness (with one partial exception - see below, chapter four). It seems inappropriate to speak of the depth of Hardy's characters, as we might speak of the depth of the characterization of Julien Sorel or Dorothea Brooke or Prince Myshkin. Hardy's characterization in this sense is shallow, and one might take D.H. Lawrence's aperçu, that his heroes and heroines are 'struggling hard to come into being' as an apt comment on their two-dimensional quality only.²¹ Yet Lawrence's comment works on a higher critical level too, for Hardy's characters, despite their shallowness in the traditional sense of character-depth, are given subjective consciousness of which the reader is always acutely aware. They are made to feel themselves as subjects conscious of existing in a separated objective world where they may - with the observer - take the self and meaning generally as ordained and determined; or they may - with the fundamental narrator - take responsibility for donating meaning and creating the self. But however they resolve their dilemma, they appear to remain in constant contact with the outer world. The connections between self and object, their point of contact, is the subject of an enquiry that is clearly epistemological. Hardy is always aware of the complex shifting relations between the two, and in asking why things are what they are (or seem to be), his characters, in some cases explicitly and always implicitly, ask why consciousness is what it seems. Selfhood is implied by things, but things do not exhaust selfhood. For it is a perpetual '"hobble of being alive"' that we each of us are 'an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensations' to ourselves, but merely an 'image' to others (p.119). This fundamental condition of life, 'each dwelling all to himself in the hermitage of his own mind'²² was felt acutely by Hardy as he grew older, and was for him the inevitable corollary to the Idealist view embodied in the description of the water-bottle - that we react to thoughts and images, not to people and things. Consciousness requires things to be conscious of, but selfhood rests on the complicated assimilation of consciousness by the synthesizing memory - 'beauty to [Tess], as to all who have felt, lay not in the thing, but in what the thing symbolized' (p.321).

Such epistemological assumptions are implicit in Hardy's complaint against one critic's view that 'a novel is the thing and not the view of a thing',²³ and lie behind a note written during

the composition of Tess - 'when a married woman who has a lover kills her husband, she does not really wish to kill her husband; she wishes to kill the situation'.²⁴ This suggests a more complex psychological view of motives, and a deeper tragedy, than Hardy's explicit attribution of heredity and chance. In other words, Tess, in stabbing Alec, did not seek to kill him, but to rid herself of the 'magic web', the 'bewildering toils' of necessity and relationship that have all along bound her.²⁵ Hardy's shrewd criticism of the late Turner evinces the same interest in relationship and individual perspective: 'Turner's water-colours: each is a landscape plus a man's soul. What he paints chiefly is light as modified by objects'.²⁶ In a similar way what Hardy paints is character, temperament, as modified by the world's realities; but also the world's realities as they are absorbed by character. The two are an infinite regress. Why are Hardy's characters caught in this perpetually dualistic conflict?

When the problem of selfhood in the world is seen as this, it appears to be a deterministic circle. Unlike Wilde, Hardy saw the model of the self as inextricably caught in the complexities of motives and events because the two are both, simultaneously, cause and effect. Wilde's concept of the self's relation to others was always carefully dialectic - self, things, Criticism; self, others, Individualism. Hardy's characters always see the self as dualistic - self and others, self and things. The reason for this lies, as is always the case in a dualistic metaphysics, with the category of volition.

It is a simplification of the problem of selfhood to say that, in matters of free will, the self is either free or determined. Among many possible replies to the problem of necessity, two are relevant here, both definitions of free will. The first declares that all men are free, but free to use that freedom only once. The second declares that all men are free, but must exercise that freedom at every moment. The distinction here is clearly one of choice: one may choose once, or one must choose perpetually. This crux of choice is at the heart of the determinist problem, for determinism denies real choice. Analyses of 'could' that refer to possible alternative actions rather than possible alternative decisions are a mere refinement of determinism. They simply do not touch on whether one could have chosen to do otherwise than he, in fact, did choose. The first choice treats an action as the effect of a cause; the second treats an act as both cause

and effect. Hardy clearly takes the first. All his characters come to a moment in their lives where the force of actuality compels them to a free choice - and realize this only in retrospect. In Tess, such a moment does not occur, as we might expect it to occur, near the start where Tess decides to go to Alec. Chapter five is full of qualifiers for Tess's decision; and the tangle of motives and the ominous future presaged by Alec's appearance in the novel is so emphasized as to leave the reader in no doubt as to any element of free will in Tess's decision. After the rape of Tess, for example, the observer wonders 'why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive' (p.101). Similarly in chapters fifty-one and fifty-two, both Tess and the reader are made to feel that her return to Alec is an inevitability. Her free choice lies not here, but in her stabbing of Alec and her reunion with Angel. It is the book's most poignant irony of course, that it leads to her death. Significantly, this is the only important action that Tess makes in the time span of the novel which is not witnessed by the observer at first hand.

In answer to the problem we started with, then, it may be said that Tess's will is free but, except on one occasion, everywhere determined by her own sense of imprisonment in the tangles of actuality. This is caused not only by Hardy's pessimistic view of the limitations to the freedom of self-determination that the self possesses, but, more directly, by the aesthetic consequence of this - a split, dualistic narrator, of whom it may be said that one amorphous part carries the burden of responsibility for telling the tale (the fundamental narrator), while the other refuses all responsibility for involvement in the novel, yet is still a crucial element in it (the observer).

That the view of the self's freedom to will and the state of the narrator are closely linked to each other may be seen by looking briefly at the treatment of time that is involved in the two concepts of free will mentioned above. The second sees finite time as a moving present moment that contains within itself the unceasing possibility of realizing possibility (the future), and which is the sum of all actuality (the past). The first sees time in a more traditional way: that is, as characterized by evenly spread homogeneity and the existence of only present reality. Thus, time becomes a grid upon which movement



and events may be charted as a series of plotted points, similar to moves in a game of draughts. Past, present and future remain discrete. This spatialized time is clearly of benefit to a novelist such as Hardy, much of whose art lies in the expert ease with which he sets scenes, starts and moves the action and orchestrates the undulant flow and gather of the plot. But such a view of time has important consequences for the existing self, who exists within time. If only the present is, then the past is not, because it has been but now is not, and the future will be but is not yet. The present is isolated; and this view of it gives rise - when its conclusion is put into practice - to an impressionistic view of the self as a matrix of ever-fleeting impressions. Such a condition is felt by Hardy's characters at moments of crisis - Tess, staring at the water-bottle; Angel, confronted by the furniture. Now, if the present is, and is constantly moving, and is separate from non-existent past and future, it is difficult to imagine or understand how one may come to an awareness of past and future. Of course, characters remember and hope; but at what ought to be moments of decision, of self-government, they are overwhelmed by the immanence of the force of actuality, which blots out possibility while the present moment moves inexorably into actuality. The sequence of moments is born and dies, each one with all its experiences, and points towards despair. It leads to odd spatial/temporal juxtapositions - stars in a puddle, the living Tess on one side of a vault door at Kingsbere, her many dead ancestors on the other side. Above all, it suggests that the only way for recognition of past and future as part of our selves would seem to be from an Archimedean point outside of time and the temporal process - such as the observer fills. It is the fundamental narrator who mediates between the world of the novel and that of the reader, whose responsibility encompasses epistemological questions and problems of inter-subjective relations and perspective. But his influence is weakened by the powerful, all-pervasive presence of the observer who functions as a meta-narrator, and whose essential quality of watching, with all its implications outlined above, functions as a primum mobile behind all actions - including that of writing - in the novel. For by taking the observer as the point of perspective from which action and character are viewed and, further, by disguising this by still employing the more traditional and conventional fundamental narrator, Hardy himself is able to satisfy the ordering of the novel while yet remaining outside the closure imposed by his own

detachment. Hardy has, as it were, escaped from the novel, and it is now the observer who is caught in the emotive struggles of the text. He witnesses action, but cannot speak or intervene in it, for the action is already actuality. As in Father and Son, this illusion of passive watching gains its power not from the pastness of its object, but from the position of helplessly watching what is inexorable. We as readers watch the narrator watch the characters, who watch each other: 'their baffled hearts looking out of their eyes with a joylessness pitiful to see'(p.401). The centre of movement is Tess herself, who in doing, is watched with feelings of awe, wryness, lust, tenderness by everyone in and out of the novel. Once outside of time, Tess will be free, like the observer, of the endless '"hobble of being alive"'. She seems to achieve this for a short period at the end of the novel in her flight with Angel, but this short span is circumscribed by death: '"it is as it should be", she murmured. "Angel, I am almost glad - yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much. I have had enough; and now I shall not live for you to despise me!"'(p.418)

Conclusion

In these two models of selfhood then, one may see two opposite movements, where the work of one author is centred upon the notion that the self is self-determining, while the work of the other describes the notion that the self is tightly limited by the trammels of actuality in the process of realizing its possibility. It might be argued that what is here termed a 'model of selfhood' is merely the set of beliefs which each author - particularly Hardy - held. Both authors would have said they were beliefs. But the mere fact that both were acutely aware of these beliefs as only one answer among others, and aware of why they had reached them, makes it more appropriate to say that they were aware not only of the metaphoric quality of selfhood but that the self creates and explains itself to itself through its own model.

Human existence is embedded in history. The self must become what it is, and therefore the basis of human being is a quest for the truth of its existence. But the object of the quest - the truth one is to become - is deeply problematic. One cannot seek for what he knows, since he already knows it; but neither can he seek for what he does not know, since he would not even know for what to seek. In other words, one cannot become a self until one is a self.

The answer to such circularity lies in the view that the self is not an eternal essence which develops with a natural necessity; it emerges in a manner explicitly historical. The very act of coming into being - impossible outside temporality - demands free response to the possibilities present in any given situation; and the self continues to become only if it sustains the dialectical relationship with possibility. This is Wilde's position as to freedom which the self may exert in the possibilities of becoming. It is a position that deeply influences all of his criticism and, with its stress on the self changing itself and finding its own illumination, is determinant of his critical forms. But the moment in which any choice is made is itself the product of any number of prior historical decisions. The range of possibilities that are therefore present in any given moment are never infinite, but restricted to a greater or lesser extent. This is Hardy's point of view in the matter (stars in a puddle). Really, the self, like history, is a dynamic, dialectical relationship between being and becoming; past and future; necessity and possibility. In retrospect, the specific factors which contributed to the character of the present self appear as determinants; in prospect, they were alternatives. Which is to say, retrospectively the self is determined, prospectively it is free. Hardy took the retrospective point of view; Wilde the prospective. Neither, and both are right. The self becomes a self in freedom, but the existential choice of one moment becomes the accumulated past to another, which determines the alternatives available in the latter moment. When possibility is denied, then the self petrifies in necessity. When necessity is ignored, the self drifts in mere indeterminacy. And where Wilde ignored necessity, Hardy turns from possibility, each, as we have seen, for different reasons.

Because of his acute understanding of the relation between art and life, history and nature, Wilde's criticism succeeds. It does so not in spite of, but because of, his deficient model; for Wilde's model of the self-determining self lent an epistemological ground to the shrewd critical insight that history and art create nature, and to the consequent insight that such a truth could not be published in portentous solemnity, or abstract critical systems - at least, not in Gath. Paradox, witty inversions, raillery, merely spoken words and the rest of Wilde's motley devices stand guard over his meaning, in the same manner that parable and dhoza

stand guard over divine revelation.

Hardy's model of selfhood in Tess is deficient because it is too determined; but the novel succeeds as a novel not in spite of this model deficiency but because of it. For much of the novel's power arises from the split narrator who, as we have seen, is both cause and consequence of, the strictly determined self.

The success of both authors here, therefore, is dependent on the model of selfhood that informs their work, and their awareness of the nature of their dynamic and determinative models. In other texts, as we shall see, their awareness of the consequences of their models is not so sure, and the texts are detrimentally affected by this.

Notes to Chapter One

1. The Letters of Oscar Wilde, ed. by Rupert Hart-Davis (London, 1962), p.486).
2. Ibid., pp. 425, 448, 469, 508.
3. The Artist as Critic, op.cit., p.349. Further references to this edition of Wilde's critical writings are given after quotations in the text.
4. Letters, p.484.
5. Complete Shorter Fiction of Oscar Wilde, ed. by Isobel Murray (London, 1979), p.77. See also The Artist as Critic, p.404.
6. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry, The 1893 Text, ed. by Donald L. Hill (California, 1980), p.5.
7. Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York, 1975), p.78.
8. Letters, p.353.
9. Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, second edition (London, 1966), p.1203.
10. Jacques Lacan, Écrits: A Selection, translated by Alan Sheridan (London, 1977), p.82.
11. Quoted in F.P. Harris, The Neo-Idealist Political Theory (New York, 1944), p.34.
12. Appearance and Reality, second edition (Oxford, 1897), p.5.
13. Letters, p.512.
14. Robert Graves, Collected Poems 1975 (London, 1975), p.88.
15. Letters, p.503. Further references to De Profundis are given after quotations in the text.
16. The Woodlanders, ed. and introduced by David Lodge, The New Wessex Edition (London, 1975), p.142.
17. Tess of the D'Urbervilles, ed. and introduced by P.N. Furbank, The New Wessex Edition (London, 1975), p.151. Further references are given after quotations in the text.
18. For other examples of this inversion, see pp.116, 132.
19. This quality of observation has been commented on by a number of critics, notably J. Hillis Miller in his book Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire. I agree with him that the observer is Hardy's surrogate in the novel, but draw different conclusions from this. I also feel that observation is not the entirety of the narrative voice.
20. Father and Son: A Study of Two Temperaments, ed. by James Hepburn (London, 1974), p.5.
21. 'Study of Thomas Hardy', from Phoenix (London, 1961), p.410. Quoted in A. Alvarez's introduction to the Penguin edition of Tess (Harmondsworth, 1978), p.20.

22. The Trumpet-Major, introduced by Barbara Hardy with notes by Laurel Brake and Ernest Hardy, The New Wessex Edition, (London, 1975), p.120.
23. Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings, ed. by Harold Orel (London, 1967), p.124.
24. F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy (London and New York, 1962), p.221.
25. Pater, op.cit., p.185.
26. Life, op.cit., p.216.

CHAPTER TWO THE REGENERATIVE SELF

Only in communicating and in struggling does the power of destiny become free.

— Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford, 1980), p.436.

i. 'Heart of Darkness': The Unutterable Self

'The Return' is an unusual work in Conrad's pre-1900 oeuvre. He describes it in his Author's Note as a 'left-handed production', his right hand being occupied at the time with 'Karain: A Memory'.¹ Conrad's estimation of the story was affected by the opinion of Edward Garnett, who in a letter persuaded him that, like 'The Sisters', it was not entirely a success. Conrad wrote back, 'Well! Never more! It is evident that my fate is to be descriptive and descriptive only. There are things I must leave alone'.² Conrad was probably referring to the form of the story more than its themes in this last sentence; for the latter appear time and again throughout Conrad's fiction before the First World War. Garnett's advice was sound on this point, for the failure of the story lies not in the psychology it explores, but in the manner it presents its findings. Shortly before writing the story, Conrad had met Henry James for the first time, and the influence of the Master was at its high point. Conrad's treatment of the story betrays his admiration of James's achievements in narrative techniques; and he soon agreed this was not his metier. The story bears out his remark that it cost him dear in 'sheer toil, in temper and in disillusion'(p.ix). The narrator's sarcasm is obvious, and he addresses the reader too flatly, without the subtle obliquity of the narrator-figure in 'The Nigger of the Narcissus' or the Marlow tales. Consequently, the narrative appears pleonastic and contrived. Images are explanatory similes rather than elliptic kernels of meaning. Thus, Alvan Hervey and his wife 'were no more capable of real intimacy than two animals feeding at the same manger, under the same roof, in a luxurious stable'(p.122). The description is bald statement, and made redundant by its reiteration. As an image of people regressing to an animal state it might be compared to a similar image in 'Heart of Darkness', that of Kurtz crawling on his belly

through the grass towards the horned witch-doctor; and it soon becomes apparent that the power in the latter image resides precisely in the absence of explanation: it functions in its context as its own explanation. As a simile with no context the image from 'The Return' needs considerable loquacity to describe itself: there is no dramatic or ironic tension. In the same way the description of the loveless husband and wife as 'like two skilful skaters cutting figures on thick ice for the admiration of the beholders' is, in its detachment from the rest of the narrative, too strikingly obvious a simile, and does exactly what it describes (p.123).

These examples are a microcosm of the story's formal failure; but in spite of this considerable flaw - a flaw that is the result of a selfhood inadequately rendered in the text - one can see that Conrad is attempting to portray a selfhood in the process of radical change. From the start we are presented with a mechanistic world, lacking in any humanitarian impulses or individuality. Alvan Hervey is the representative of this world - 'one had simply to be without stain and without reproach to keep one's place in the forefront of life' (p.131) - who comes home one night to find his wife has eloped with an acquaintance. In another context Conrad wrote that 'a man's real life is that accorded him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love'.³ Hervey is in receipt of neither. The news shatters what had appeared to be his strong grasp of reality and, from the heights of class, duty, principles and self-restraint, Alvan plunges into the chaos of passion, to which he has never before given way. He is now 'unable to distinguish clearly between what is and what ought to be; between the inexcusable truth and the valid pretences' (p.131). His immediate thoughts are for his reflection in other people - how they will react to this calamity. He visualizes this only too well, and wishes that his wife had rather died: 'he sought comfort in clinging to the contemplation of the only fact of life that the resolute efforts of mankind had never failed to disguise in the clatter and glamour of phrases. And nothing lends itself more to lies than death. If she had only died!' (p.129) Death is an acceptable form of taboo in society - particularly for close relatives of the dead - around which has gathered a host of rituals and circumlocutions. Hervey would revel in this, especially since, in the totally new state of affairs, he does not

know what to do; and is so intent on trying out new roles in an agony of bewilderment that he misses the truth of the matter. Again, death accumulates lies about itself (de mortuis nihil nisi bonum); while in his present deserted position, Hervey realizes that he will be forced to tell the truth.

This inevitability drives him to search for an acceptable truth, which leads him to a total confusion of the real and imaginary. Above all, he must impose a dignifying, self-shoring structure upon the events; and to this end he examines the causal relationships of the past to the present. But he is completely disorientated and feels himself to be shut off and 'in exile from the ordered past' - that 'delightful world of crescents and squares' (the privileged, geometric world of laissez-faire individualism), in a hostile world where 'the wanderings must begin again; the painful explaining away of facts, the feverish raking up of illusions, the cultivation of a fresh crop of lies in the sweat of one's brow, to sustain life, to make it supportable, to make it fair'.(p.134) Consequently, when his wife unexpectedly returns to him, he finds his attitude towards her has changed: 'he peered at her with inward trepidation. She was mysterious, significant, full of obscure meaning - like a symbol'(p.139). He cannot understand her bid for freedom, not understanding or having any knowledge of freedom itself. In the following exchange with his wife he summons up a halting monologue on the rewards of society for duty done, decency observed; but the more he soliloquizes the more he treats abstractions as things, to be thrown at his wife like the water (and perhaps the glass). Finding himself, in spite of all his vaunted self-restraint, continually returning to outbursts of feeling, he concludes 'that evil must be forgotten... like the knowledge of certain death is kept out of the daily existence of men'(p.160), and then discovers that this 'appeared very easy, amazingly feasible, if one only kept strictly to facts, gave one's mind to their perplexities and not to their meaning'. Hervey chooses to see facts as the sole determinants of human conduct. In doing so he rejects the view to infinity that makes of every action a decision involving truth and the nature of reality. Reality for Hervey is fundamentally incoherent, and can only be understood through the prisms of duty, fidelity, self-restraint, and the like. Because of his fear of this incoherence he

attributes meaning to things in themselves and can thus break the seamless unity of experience and reality (this, like passion, would touch him too closely), isolate himself, and accept only what he wants to see in that external reality. This recent flood of chaos into his life 'could be forgotten - must be forgotten, like things that can only happen once - death for instance' (p.169). He demands that his wife come down for dinner, with the thought that the 'important thing was that their life would begin again with an every-day act - with something that could not be misunderstood, that, thank God, had no moral meaning, no perplexity - and yet was symbolic of their uninterrupted communion in the past - in all the future' (p.169).

But he finds that the incident cannot be forgotten, and combs it repeatedly for meaning. Obsessed by it, he begins to realize that the burden of cultivating 'a fresh crop of lies' in the future is intolerable. Most meaningless of all is that his wife, with the candid brow and pure eyes seems exactly as she has always been. The scenes that ravage him seem to have left no mark on her: she was always like this. He is appalled at the falsity he sees suddenly in the past, in the present, and which presumably will continue into the future. He can see no meaning to her - 'and he would never know what she meant. Never! Never! No one could. Impossible to know' (pp.171-2). This lack of meaning appears to be the kernel of the story, and Hervey's realization of it the turning-point of his life. It leads him to ask who this person really is, and so - in the manner of Bradley's 'affirmation' of self and others - onto a consideration of her hitherto neglected otherness; then that of the maids, and his wife's lover, and finally that of the world outside of his mirroring bedroom.

Yet, though he becomes aware of a truth here - that 'there can be no life without faith and love' - the years of solipsistic isolation, of 'uninterrupted communion' without meaning have rendered him literally speechless (p.177). Having been reborn into meaning, he is infans, and his wife misunderstands him because there is no binding past of shared feeling for mutual reference. The point is a subtle one, and Conrad makes it by highlighting throughout the story the widening gap between meaning and language. The halting,

staccato exchanges exhibit a fear of language - 'words are more terrible than facts' (p.143) because they are not truth itself, but a manifestation of truth, and as such require an awareness of choice and definition of meaning (which may be easily avoided, or petrified to facts). His wife attempts to explain how she has, by her action, tried to be honest and faithful, to avoid living falsely and defensively, in 'perfect security, as of invincible ignorance' (pp.152-3); but at this point Hervey deliberately shuts out the possibility of meanings other than those he attaches to words, and later accuses her of trying to misunderstand him (p.163). He, however, does not try to see her meaning; and when, in reply to his accusation that she has '"lived a lie"' declares '"Ah! you have made it so easy"', he retreats into defensive aggression, not willing to realize that while for him the present is a break from the past, for her it is merely a continuation - a point he only comes to understand at the dinner table. Hervey's failure here parallels that of Angel Clare, who does not recognize that there is a vast elusive reality beyond his imagination, and that his aim is not to invent a fiction of any thing - the artist's realm - but to light upon the right version of certain facts. In 'The Return', language becomes not communication based on shared past experiences and values, but simply a vehicle for either character to parade his or her private, solipsistic fantasies of a world. At her return, Hervey is obsessed by the meaning of his wife's behaviour, seeks to penetrate the symbol, but will not listen to her explanations, because what he really wants to hear is what he sees in the mirrors of the bedroom - reflections of his self. In such a state the appearance of truth - as with the appearance of normal life - must be maintained at all costs; and when his wife expresses contempt for mere words he bursts out '"Words? Yes, words. Words mean something - yes - they do -"' (p.163), but he implicitly denies this several pages later when he declares '"Pon my word, I loved you - I love you now"' (p.176). His fundamental fear of the world and especially of his wife for her seemingly irrational action makes him attribute to her the essential meaning of the episode, as he has attributed meaning to things in the world: he seeks in her 'for a magic word that would make the enigma clear... And there is no such word! The enigma is only made clear by sacrifice, and the gift of heaven is in the hands of every man' (p.176). He must sacrifice his old meaningless meanings - that is, things - if he

is ever to gain the responsible, sympathetic perspective that will reveal the enigma of faith and love. It is only when he comes to realize that the secret lies not in things or words but in responsibility to all men that 'the portals of beyond' open for him to truth (p.177). These gates of the future recall those of the past which shut him off from his meaningless past. The way now lies out of the agonizing present, the oppressive house, his own fear and trembling: Hervey unlocks the front door and 'never returned'.

Such a neat tripartite temporal structure is absent in 'Heart of Darkness', which is an exploration of darkness such as Hervey experiences in his unbearable present. That threat of an irremediable opposition between ontology and ethics - present everywhere in late century Idealism by virtue of the nature of the forged bonds between metaphysics and ethics - is confronted in 'Heart of Darkness' where it is evaded or simply passed over in 'The Return'. It is symbolized by that isolation from nature that Conrad felt himself, and which is present so forcefully in the worlds of the Thames, Africa, the sepulchral city: "the earth seemed unearthly".⁴ Conrad described the feeling in a pessimistic moment to Cunningham Graham:

what makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it... There is no morality, no knowledge and no hope; there is only the consciousness of ourselves which drives us about a world that whether seen in a convex or a concave mirror is always but a vain and fleeting appearance.⁵

The story explicitly rejects linear development as this unfolds in 'The Return': Marlow tells a story on board a yacht; the sun goes down at the end; nothing else happens, no one irrevocably leaves. But in this static novella, Conrad was one of a few authors who saw their way to an original embodiment of the challenging Idealist conception of art, as it is set down in the Preface to 'The Nigger of the Narcissus' - 'a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect'.⁶ In doing so, Conrad aimed at a form that would result in 'a continued vibration that, I hoped, would hang in the air and dwell on the ear after the last note had been struck'.⁷ What is unusual here is that Conrad sees the after-effect of the story as a crucial part of the reading

process. Such a concern is part of his overall narrative strategy here, by which the success of the story's devices depend upon the reader being a part of what he reads. The story is static only in Aristotelian terms: otherwise it is an open, fluid narrative, mimicking in its form and ideology the radical incompleteness of experience and what Conrad sees as the consequent incoherence of reality. Marlow's tale, though extraordinarily close-textured, is never meant to be neatly comprehensible, and Marlow's attitude towards his narrative is a crucial element of the story, without which its meaning and implication would be entirely different.

What Marlow tells in his narrative is, in a sense, unknown to him: as he repeats throughout his story, he is unsure of its meaning, only certain that it threw "a kind of light on everything about me - and into my thoughts" (p.51). The celebrated journey into the heart of darkness reaches an Inner Station, but the darkness, like the river-fog and haze of meaning, is all around. It is indicated throughout as such, and not as a thing (Kurtz's excesses, and the like) but as an attitude, a potential or propensity in us all. The difficulty for Marlow - and Conrad - is how to locate such an idea: the story for Marlow "didn't bring any image with it" (p.81). It is incomprehensible because the whole idea is outside his experience of reality. For Marlow both are frighteningly unfamiliar. What Conrad does in 'Heart of Darkness' - and it happens in all his best stories - is in fact to compel both his protagonist and the reader to regard things and events as purely phenomenological. They are stripped of usual, habitual meaning, for 'habit is relative to a stereotyped world';⁸ and both reader and protagonist at least, are shown that the meaning of things does not inhere in them. We are reduced to the position of accepting that the truths of everyday life are in fact the merely relative consequences of an Idealist 'sufficient reason', and that the meaning-giving process comes from us alone. Thus, Captain MacWhirr in Typhoon comes to a realization of the true destructive potential of the storm he has knowingly sailed into when the things in his chart-room are disarrayed - familiar objects in familiar places have become threateningly unfamiliar; the past process of order-bestowing has been disrupted, habit dissolved, interpretation broken down.⁹

Conrad, in fact, is giving us glimpses of a state where the world is seen without interpretation. But because interpretation

is the meaning-donating act, such a state cannot be described. Language must break down in the attempt, because it will have no referent - and the link that holds between a word and its reference has, in Idealist models, an intimacy that outstrips that between one word and another. (This is why Symbolism is essentially a transcendental movement). This condition can only be indicated by the dhoza technique noted in chapter one, of which metaphor and catachresis are the prime examples; but even here, the familiar antinomies are strangely absent. The presumption that meaning permanently resides in objects is, in the book's schema, equivalent to, or a parallel of, that invasion motif which pervades the novella. Presumption of such meaning in the activities of modern man leads to civilization being a "fantastic invasion" - literally a neurotic Bezeutung - the true meaning of whose manic activities, with all its absurdities, is truthfully manifested at the cutting-edge, the frontier - whether it be Roman galleys on the Thames, or a Belgian steamboat on the Congo. The unknown must be conquered by an imperialism of spirit; meaning is imposed upon things and then taken as their truth. The two women in black at the office are "introducing, introducing continuously to the unknown" (p.57).

The story is thus a search for meaning, with Marlow struggling to accommodate all of his experience in terms of his own identity, which builds itself upon recognizable epistemological landmarks - will, passion, duty and the like. But the experience refuses to be coerced into traditional moulds. The old terms simply do not fit: Greek and Christian concepts of passion and freedom adopt new, strange patterns when the will is not rational but irrational and unconscious; paradoxes abound and what is may not be what it seems. Neat recognizable dualisms are set up only to be broken down, ironically. The horror is described in potent negatives by Marlow - "nameless", "unspeakable", "inconceivable" - because the classical words are not enough, and contain 'residues', in Pareto's sense of the term, outworn and redundant to the experience. This causes break-downs in the novella's imagery. Light, for instance, no longer universally opposes darkness. The whiteness and light around the things connected with the Intended may be compared to the blackness of the knitters; but the images do not contain the qualities of polar opposites. Similarly, the darkness is not merely the darkness of evil, but a

more fundamental chthonic darkness of chaos and unmeaning which, as an existential meta-criticism of experience, underlies all other categories of imagery. Both darkness and light are symbols of unease and disease. The light in the Intended's house is not the purity symbolized by the light appearing on the face of the waters, as in Genesis or the start of the book (and even this last image appears ironic in retrospect).

The image of the blind-folded, draped woman carrying a lighted torch expresses the irony implicit in such a wrenching of tradition, and serves as a warning that such familiar a priori categories of mind will not be found unchanged here. Marlow's little tale is a direct onslaught on our presupposition that activities may be invested with spiritual values. This procedure is a necessary one; yet such values do not exist as abstractions, but shine their meaning in the fallen experience of men. Marlow exposes the inversions and perversions they are subject to, and exhibits himself the poverty of their absence by his own temporary stop-gap of the work ethic.

Such spiritual values, Marlow states, are what redeems the idea of colonialism. He sees more clearly than anyone the effects of cultural imperialism, but still upholds the "idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea - something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to" (p.51). Marlow may be putting this forward in good faith, but perhaps it is due to the memory of what Kurtz became and did to the "idea" that he "broke off" at this point. It is in 'The Return' that Conrad explores the ramifications of the "sentimental pretence", and he showed there that, as Wilde points out, sentimentality in morality is but the other side of cynicism; and the shallowness of Hervey's perverted creed of the insufficient 'My station and its duties' stands revealed.¹⁰ In 'Heart of Darkness' the elevation of the Idea by Marlow is the occasion for the shattering, albeit reluctant, of any such creed. Kurtz inverts and perverts the whole doctrine not merely because he is what he is, but because, in the vicious and corrupt colonial world both he and Marlow enter he can find no station in which to discharge his duties. Finding no station, Kurtz casts off the "self-restraint" of morality, and in his inner station creates of himself a divinity which he can worship. When the social self fails and is consumed, the religious

object triumphs - thus vindicating Bradley's ambivalent claim that it is in religion that morality finds its 'satisfaction'.¹¹ Marlow's own "idea" in the narrative - his only positive idea - is a pragmatic work-ethic. It appears at a number of points throughout the story as an ideal which allows Marlow to keep his sanity. He recognizes, however, that it is but a "surface-truth", enough to save one temporarily, but a defensive measure only, and one that is abandoned on the journey back to the coast(pp.97, 99, 149).

The dualism between spiritual values and events in the tale, however, is one of many that are broken down by a more fundamental issue. Marlow has the same trouble telling his story as Jim has when he recounts the Patna incident in the court-room. He is aware of a curious gap between words and reality, declaring it is "impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence - that which makes its truth, its meaning - its subtle and penetrating essence"(p.82). Such a feeling is common to most of the texts discussed here, but is particularly applicable to 'Heart of Darkness', where language itself breaks down in the negatives used to describe the reality of the dark heart, and is seen to become incommunicable in the major protagonist.

Thus, when he comes upon the book, An Enquiry into Some Points of Seamanship, Marlow experiences a "delicious sensation of having come upon something unmistakably real", yet the book is really as meaningless as everything else in that world. It is a system, a world of values, which is why Marlow is so eager to immerse himself in it. But this pristine system, with a title redolent of that of a philosophical treatise, is full of Russian, which appears to Marlow as cipher. Ironically, this cipher belongs to the totally irresponsible young Russian. Conrad seems to be indicating that how systems or abstract values are used is as important as the matters themselves. The work, after all, cannot possess the all-important quality of existential responsibility; only the person who uses it. The Russian does indeed "gather experiences; ideas", but he lacks any kind of critical faculty. Marlow uses the book for one purpose, the Russian for another; and they both read for entirely different reasons than those for which the book was originally written. (Marlow can see in the book "another than professional light" - p.99). The book symbolizes the Russian's passive attitude towards experience: he is

a tabula rasa, but this is an avoidance of responsibility. Marlow admires his honesty to his 'spirit of adventure', yet also recognizes its insufficiency. He is a representative of libertarian and Romantic individualism, such as that Wilde outlines in 'The Soul of Man under Socialism'; but given that here, total freedom from all restraint results in Kurtz, his complicity in such an ideal is a sign of his moral inadequacy. Freed from a search for meaning, he exists like the book, and deliberately shuts himself off from the world in an hermetic naïveté.

Existing amidst this distortion of values, Marlow's thoughts turn to Kurtz; and throughout the journey upriver he becomes for him an authority in absentia, one who may deliver meaning to the alien world around him. In seeking authority in Kurtz, Marlow at first does not understand that the self's meaning resides not in things or people or even principles in themselves, but in the continual 'choosing', which makes coherence of experience and reality. Marlow's initial desire for authority is a misunderstanding of this premise. His desire is a longing for security, for familiar experience, a desire to return to a state identical to the closed circle of 'original feeling', immediate experience, of Bradley. But Marlow, like Kurtz, also wants to be conscious of this initial unconscious feeling which is, in its nature, pre-logical, only made conscious when one deliberately back-tracks in search of it. And when it is made conscious, it becomes something other than itself. His confusion arises here because he does not understand the primary responsibility of the self that he later comes to realize. Refusal of responsibility in choosing leads to a chaotic and a deterministic world, one without meaning. Unlike Kurtz, however, Marlow realizes the folly of his desire and has enough moral acumen and strength to perceive its impossibility, and the result of attempting to practice it. Instead, he disavows such a Faustian lure, and clings (however inadequate they are in the long term) to what tatters of '"self-restraint"' as are around him - dedication to the steam-boat, admiration of the cannibals' Apollonian forbearance. Marlow's belief in the necessity for '"deliberate belief"', in an existential sense, stems from Conrad's vision that we must be aware of our tragic position in nature - as Stein puts it in Lord Jim, imperfect creatures with dreams of perfection. We must, in other words, learn the conditions

under which we are compelled to create value in this world. Kurtz, in his self-appointed divinity, refuses to acknowledge this and aspires to the Absolute. He desires both to feel and to be conscious of feeling immediate experience, that primary, ontological intuition of existence that lies beyond thought and judgment and emotion. Only in such divinely secure self-assertion can he experience his self as limitless and cause-less, the centre-piece of Dionysian rites, a god born to himself.

Kurtz does indeed give meaning to Marlow's experience, but in an unexpected way. Marlow envisages him "as discoursing... The man presented himself as a voice" (p.113). When he first sees him, he is struck by the "weirdly voracious aspect" of his mouth when he shouts; and in this image is contained the lying and vast greed that characterize Kurtz's excesses. But when he finally talks to him, Marlow discovers the solipsistic selfishness of the man, "concentrated... upon himself with horrible intensity". His tract for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, with its startling postscript (Wilde would see them as two sides to the same coin) indicates Kurtz's nature and the method - "no method" - that is his downfall. Communication in this document is corrupt. The Word, Logos, classical Reason, no longer operates. The real is not the rational, nor vice versa. Meaning as it is presented in this tract, in the book on seamanship and in the accountant's balance sheets, disappears as words float freely and can be used to any purpose.¹² The Russian is a follower of this freedom of potentiality, as is the station accountant with his spotless books and cuffs, placidly accounting Company profits close to the "grove of death" (p.70). Kurtz himself can believe in everything and nothing. Accomplished musician, painter, journalist, politician, he - 'As 'twere all life's epitome' - belongs to every extreme party, is full of potential - and realizes nothing except chaos and a riddling tale.

In his pamphlet, in fact, Kurtz is simply one more person bending language to his own ends. And yet, all language must be bent to some end. No language exists that is not free of the potential for corruption; and similarly, language as communication does not exist unless it is in use: it cannot exist as pure authority, which is what Marlow desires. As pure authority - like consciousness

of immediate experience - it becomes something other than itself, a dead language. This is part of the meaning of Kurtz for Marlow. His authority, his discoursing voice, turns out to be hollower and more monologic than anyone else's, until the moment of his death. Only at Kurtz's death does Marlow find an answer equal to his fascination with his own eloquent image of the man; and by then he knows most of the truth. Like Alvan Hervey, Marlow finds the answer within his own heart, where it lay alongside his openness to experience and his consequent ability to make some sense of a radically new experience, incoherent and messy to others. He comes to believe in the necessity for belief in a constructed selfhood, arising out of universal fallenness; and this is implicated in Kurtz's dying whisper. Kurtz's words, after all, contain no meaning. The meaning resides in what his experience and perspective on that experience have led Marlow to believe. It is a fine irony that the book's most solipsistic remark should be its clearest to the reader, in the light of Marlow's belief; and fitting that, like Stevie's death in The Secret Agent, it is never actually described. The point is emphasized when Kurtz is said to be an accomplished musician - an artist, to take it in Paterian terms, of form and no content - for he embodies enthusiasm in its etymological sense, and at a far deeper level than the Russian. Marlow, too, recognizes the potential of the self: "the mind of man is capable of anything - because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future" (p.96). Unlike Kurtz, however, he clings firmly to his belief. Yet Kurtz, the content-less artist with his unassuageable Faustian greed for power, still comes to a realization of the inner void, and articulates this nothingness. At his end, he is no longer a discoursing, eloquent infans but, in this moment of deep despair, turns to a belief in the coherence of reality and measures himself by it.

Marlow comes to benefit, as do we, from this existential belief in essential guilt, a leap into interior darkness. What this is for him and how it withstands his knowledge of Kurtz's fall is the subject of a digression by Marlow. Recognizing his kinship with the drums and dances on the banks he declares that one

'must meet that truth with his own true stuff - with his own inborn strength. Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags - rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a

deliberate belief. An appeal to me in this fiendish row - is there? Very well; I hear; I admit, but I have a voice, too, and for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced'. (p.97)

On one level, Marlow is kept safe by his devotion to work. But this did not save Kurtz who was equally devoted. At a deeper level, Marlow believes in '"a deliberate belief"', one which is created from out of the matter of one's own experience, and which cannot be given to the self either materially ('"rags"') or spiritually ('"principles"'). The word '"deliberate"' points to the element of struggle and choice, the responsibility to engage in both - which Kurtz and the Russian, amongst others, ignore - and the determination to articulate an answer: '"mine is the speech that cannot be silenced"'. Such a power gained is pre-moral ('"for good or evil"') in the normal sense of morality, and is the deliberate attempt to give meaning to experience. Kurtz's most authentic words are uttered at his death, and Marlow, in the dark night of his own soul, can recognize and salute the victory of a fellow human.

These are the only words of truth spoken by another character within the narrative. Throughout, Marlow has been confronted by walls of suspicion, cynicism, envy, indifference, incomprehension and egoism, all of which effectually stifle any real communication. In his puzzled search for meaning (not merely order, which is what the accountant possesses, and which is shown to be amoral, or at least an inferior level of morality, as of 'My station and its duties'), he seeks truth, unlike the faithless pilgrims, and refuses to lie to himself, though he is forced to lie to the brickmaker, the Russian and Kurtz. His final, agonizing lie to the Intended points up his own veracity, and his knowledge of the conditions of its frail existence. Marlow's lie to the Intended is the only reply possible to her because the Intended is so clearly seeking that lie about Kurtz that she would will not to believe the truth. And under such conditions - in the sepulchral city, with the lies of death and bereavement all around (Hervey's death-wish for his wife), and the rhetoric of the colonial tract filling her ears - Marlow feels that the truth cannot be communicated. What Marlow is faced with here is what he has felt as menacing him all along - namely, the threat of a break-down not only of truth, but of meaning. For he has felt throughout that a statement of the facts is not enough. The aura,

which will convey the essence of the facts, needs to be communicated as well; and Marlow cannot give this to the Intended because, seeking opposing fact, she will not allow her self to accept it. Like everyone else in the story infected by Kurtz's legend, she is selfish and wants only to be reassured by words. Her self does not lie open to experience and reality, but remains a hardening solipsism, of which Kurtz is the paragon. Under such conditions there is no dialogue, only monologue.

Marlow's narrative comes to an end, appropriately, on the phrase "'too dark altogether'". Its pessimistic implications seem to bear out the darkness that is scarcely redeemed by Kurtz's recognition of his dark heart, the truth of which is dimmed by the final lie. Yet this last untruthfulness of the narrative points to what may be the book's most positive affirmation: after all, it does not end here. The primary narrator describes Marlow as 'indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha'(p.162). His narrative has been, in one sense, a meditation - though more in the Christian than Oriental sense - and his self-interruptions, hesitations, doubts, exclamations, leaps in time and place seem to give credence to the idea of interior exploration, as does the description of him elsewhere as a 'disembodied voice'. But the meditation is a carefully planned one. Marlow has chosen his moment perfectly, and he succeeds in communicating with others, creating meaning and making sense and coherence throughout his tale, losing the attention of his listeners only once (p.94 - "'Try to be civil...'"). Where he could not convey truth to the Intended, he does so here, in the proper place and time, to others willing to make sense of what he is trying to say - the four are 'tolerant of each other's yarns - and even convictions'(p.46); and among his listeners, the primary narrator at least is sympathetic to Marlow's difficulties. Marlow says at one point, indicating an important element of the tale for the listeners, "'of course in this you fellows see more than I could then. You see me, whom you know'"(p.83). The primary narrator at this point, like Alvan Hervey, is alert for 'the sentence, for the word, that would give him the clue', that would open up the narrative fully to his experience of life (p.83). So far, the tale is lacking in full coherence for him, and it is only at the end of the book that he gives us to realize that he is at least aware of the kernel through the aura. Repeating the words of the

beginning of the book, the narrator sets them not in the serene and tranquil light of the sunset, but in an altogether darker context, symbolic of his own understanding - the river now seems 'to lead into the heart of an immense darkness' (p.162).

It is a triumph, of sorts. While language may have collapsed into itself within Marlow's narrative in the effort to transcend its limitations, to convey the full horror of its own negation and meaninglessness, it yet succeeds at the end, because meaning has been communicated by Marlow to the narrator. And the narrator has conveyed it to us, if we have been attracted and moved by the novella. Ultimately, the narrator has become as pessimistic as Marlow about the foundations of human knowledge and experience, and the assumptions behind Idealism; but he re-affirms Marlow's victory over the solipsism uttered near the start of the narrative - "'we live, as we dream - alone'" (p.82). In a matroshka-doll structure, Kurtz's, Marlow's, the narrator's and Conrad's victory reverses the lies symbolized by the untruth told to the Intended. Kurtz "'had something to say. He said it"; and Marlow's is "'the speech that cannot be silenced"'. The most fundamental meaninglessness, that of meaning itself, has been uttered and understood. It is a small victory, but nevertheless a crucial one to the realization of selfhood.

ii. One of Our Conquerors: The Self-less Self

The kernel and the haze, central to the technique and self-model of 'Heart of Darkness', find their analogue in Meredith's late novel, One of Our Conquerors (1891). At the centre of the narrative lies the image of the 'Idea', which Victor Radnor first encounters and loses while falling on London Bridge. The Idea haunts him throughout the rest of his career, and he chases it vainly in schemes and ideas of his own - high social position for himself and his common-law wife Nataly, dispersion of his amassed wealth, a seat in Parliament, marriage of his daughter Nesta into the peerage. He is a representative of his circle, all people who live in ideas - vegetarianism, anti-alcoholism, anti-smoking, feminism (although Nesta, significantly, has no 'sympathy for the working of the idea').¹³

But Victor's plans never seem to bring him any nearer to his Idea. At his death it remains as elusive and veiled as it had been on London Bridge, to both Victor and the reader. More specifically, it is veiled to the reader because it is only ever seen through the veiling, distorting consciousnesses of Victor and other characters. It is true that the Idea comes to him at the end of the novel, as the narrator promises us, 'full-statured, and embraceable'; but by then he is mad and unable to communicate it. This, and the fact that it is reported by the distorting mind of Dudley, who puts 'the stamp of the world' upon it, ensures that it will remain veiled: 'he had "an Idea"'. His begging of Dudley to listen without any punctilio (putting a vulgar oath before it), was the sole piece of unreasonableness in the explanation of the idea: and that was not much wilder than the stuff Dudley had read from reports of Radical speeches' (p.510). By appropriating the model of the Idea and conveying, as we shall see, in metaphor and in veiling consciousnesses, Meredith provides one answer to the question, What is, and how can one communicate, the vastly complex inner processes of the self's consciousness of itself?

For Meredith the problem was both linguistic and epistemological, and is worked out most clearly in the characters of Colney Durance and Skepsey, two of many 'portraits of philosophers' scattered throughout Meredith's novels: 'the forecast may be hazarded that if we do not speedily embrace Philosophy in Fiction, the Art is doomed to extinction'.¹⁴ Philosophy is for Meredith a power, a faculty of mind. It is not an autonomous activity, as Bradley would like to see it, divorced from direct application to other areas of life, but the ordered integration of experience and reality into an harmonious whole. Wilde pointed out this relation when he said that Meredith's characters 'not merely live, but they live in thought. One can see them from myriad points of view. They are suggestive. There is soul in and around them. They are interpretative and symbolic'.¹⁵ Thus Skepsey, with his 'System' of boxing, his 'First Principles', is involved in a philosophical activity of mind as much as his millionaire and cultured employer. Both are engaged in ordering their experience amidst the apparently aimless surge and eddy of humanity around them; and Skepsey is more successful, although a minor character, because in his own smaller social sphere, he gains a comprehension of a coherent model of selfhood through his ordered activities. His

awareness of the contingent nature of his model is limited, for he is of course at the same time a caricature of philosophical activity, with abstract principles applied to fists and broken noses and the physical health of English recruits. Such an incongruous juxtaposition is resolved when Skepsey adopts the pacifist principles of the Salvationist Matilda Pridden.

However, if Skepsey, with Matilda's help, is able to see his way to an ordering principle in the flux of experience and reality, the reasons for his inability to tell a story, to 'subordinate it to narrative' (p.165) on a number of occasions are indicative of the flaws of such abstraction. He is aware of the self's capacity to change, but not of its metaphoric quality: principles, therefore, are seen by him as things to be absorbed, not as re-created, synthesized impulses originating from the self. Thus, when Victor demands the facts of a story, Skepsey finds it impossible to separate facts from sentiments: 'from his not having begun well [the facts] had become dry as things underfoot. It was an error to have led off with the sentiments' (p.167). Such sentiments, indeed, cannot be communicated directly, particularly to one so eager for facts as Victor; but Skepsey - unlike Marlow - never comes to realize that the very act of telling is a re-creation, a fiction, albeit based on past events. To tell the truth at all we must edit it, and convey it in imaginative structures:

the little man did not know, that time was wanted for imagination to make the roadway or riverway of a true story, unless we press to invent; his mind had been too busy on the way for him to clothe in speech his impressions of the passage of incidents at the call for them. (p.165)

Truth of event cannot be conveyed without the mediation of fictive re-construction. Lacking an understanding of this, Skepsey cannot give a balanced account of the street-fight involving Matilda and Dartrey: he gave 'a lame version of the story; flat until he came to his heroine's behaviour, when he brightened a moment, and he sank back absorbed in her principles and theories of life' (pp.407-8).

If Skepsey lacks the awareness of re-cognition necessary to tell the truth of past events, then Colney similarly lacks the perception necessary to convey abstract truth about the present -

all the more paradoxical in a satirist with the command of epigrammatical wit that Colney possesses. It is his satirical impulse, however, that is a block to effectual communication. Colney does not lack involvement in the issues he attacks: but his instrument of analysis, satire, is too destructive - "our satirist is an executioner by profession, a moralist in excuse, or at the tail of it; though he thinks the position reversed, when he moralizes angrily to have his angry use of the scourge condoned" (p.271). Throughout the novel Colney is consistently 'near a truth', and he is the only person to see what effect Victor's plans are having on those close to him; but as Simeon Fenellan points out, "the moment old Colney moralizes, he's what the critics call sententious. We've all a parlous lot too much pulpit in us" (p.25). Both he and Victor are agreed that criticism of the nation's vices should be couched in 'no metaphors, no similes, nor flowery insubstantiality; but honest Saxon manger stuff: and put it repeatedly, in contempt of the disgust of iteration; hammering so a soft place on the Anglican skull, which is rubbed in consequence, and taught at last through soreness to reflect' (p.208). The analogy of the blow on the skull is redolent of Victor's fall on London Bridge, and his ominous tic at moments of crisis of rubbing the spot where he bruised himself. The link is significant: like Victor's refusal to learn from experience, Colney's satire helps no one in the novel. His most positive creation is, ironically, his serial story, 'The Rival Tongues', written to demonstrate the power of language. But the rival tongues of the western envoys to Japan cannot agree on a universal language, and the tale itself ends in Babel-like discord and confusion. It demonstrates, instead, the verbum infans, and is a metaphor for the inarticulacy which most characters in the novel are attempting to overcome. Furthermore, 'the satirist too devotedly loves his lash to be a persuasive teacher' (p.147). Colney's attitude towards the world is one of aggressive spite, and the world reacts accordingly, ignoring or baiting him. His satire degenerates into waspishness which solipsistically reflects only his own bitterness. As Dartrey puts it, "his picture of the country is a portrait of himself by the artist".

In different ways, Colney and Skepsey are both Cassandra figures in their inability to convey their deep seriousness in a form which will persuade their hearers of their own commitment to truth.

Both attempt in their own fashion to utter truths about their own and other selves, and find that they 'have not the words to stamp the indefinite things' (p.34). It is the crux of the novel, and the supreme challenge to the novelist's art in every line he writes to overcome such speechlessness. The strategy of the Idea was Meredith's answer in this novel.

The device is a microcosm of the novel's obliquity of style and structure; and it is a measure of Meredith's subtlety as a novelist that he embeds in such a numinous technique what had hitherto been regarded as a 'social', objective novel genre - the 'condition-of-England' novel. Politics and the conditions of social life of all classes are never far from the forefront of the book, and Victor's wealth, ambitions and ideas make him the perfect hero of such a novel. Yet Victor is no hero, and the novel, while in personal terms the story of his fall, differs from other overtly social novels in analyzing the psychological, interior conditions rather than pointing up social abuses. It points to the radical cause of England's condition, which lies in the tangled motives for action undertaken. Motivation becomes the focus for the reader, and action itself becomes the inert catalyst whereby motives are metamorphosed into consequences. In so doing, Meredith dismantles the conventional plot, defeating conventional expectations of such a work, and steering the reader into uncharted regions of experience.

In a similar fashion Meredith deconstructs the accepted conventions between protagonist and narrator - more rigorously here than elsewhere - so presenting the reader with a quasi-stream-of-consciousness technique which, inevitably, gives rise to a host of paradoxes and curious inversions of conventions. Victor's unnamed, kernel-less Idea is the locus classicus of this technique. That it remains nameless is crucial to the novel. Names give the reader a false sense of epistemological security: they are required to order and communicate experience, but allow the speaker and listener to accept what are in fact rough analogies for exact knowledge: 'Naming is treacherous, names divide/ Truth into lesser truths, enclosing them/ In a coffin of counters'.¹⁶ Once the impossibility of precise, non-metaphorical identification of things with ideas is realized, it may be put to good use by increasing the mistaken identification. The conventional, habitual name then drops away and in its place

comes an analogy or metaphor which will, if understood, increase our knowledge of our experience of a particular idea, or a category of things, or how one may differ from another. The process is one of intentional forgetfulness and re-creation in the author; but Meredith envisages it in a pristine, unfallen condition in the novel's ideal character, Nesta - 'her vision of the reality of things was without written titles, to put the stamp of the world on it' (p.343). In contrast to Nesta, Victor unwittingly puts 'the stamp of the world' on his Idea whenever he pursues it. He refuses to acknowledge the poverty of his ordinary speech in dealing with the inner reality of impulses, sensations, thoughts, memories. Victor's failures here and elsewhere all give him sinister intimations - which he represses - that consciousness is not the stable, rational and above all cognizable entity that he, his circle of friends, and the late nineteenth century reader generally took it to be. Meredith deals here with the concept of the unconscious that Hardy hints at in the note he wrote on Tess quoted above; that he masks in The Well-Beloved; and that Conrad explores, particularly in 'Heart of Darkness' (Freud's Project would appear four years after One of Our Conquerors, and James's Principles of Psychology had appeared the previous year). Meredith indicated in a letter how language may replace self-knowledge with narrow pride:

we have to know that we know ourselves. Those who tell us we do not know, cannot have meditated the word Conscience. In truth, so well do we know ourselves, that there is a general resolve to know someone else instead. We set up an ideal of the cherished object; we try our friends and the world by the standard we have raised within, supported by pride, obscured by the passions.... I preach for the mind's acceptance of Reality in all its forms.¹⁷

Such acceptance is analogous to Wilde's reiterated statement in De Profundis - 'everything that is realized is right'. Meredith, however, goes beyond this statement of synthesizing freedom.

Like Wilde, Meredith abhorred the '"cheap severity of abstract ethics"', but like Wilde too, he is no ethical empiricist. To discover his position on ethics and the nature of consciousness, we must turn to the rhetorical devices in the novel. The moral struggles of the characters in the book are embodied in the language of metaphor and trope - analogy, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, catachresis - which

performs the dual function of working against abstraction and analysing character and action. Metaphor, however, more than other major rhetorical devices, requires to a large extent the sympathy and participation of the reader in the re-creation of meaning; consisting as it does in "the presentation of the facts of one category in the idioms appropriate to another".¹⁸ This concentration of effort, equivalent to Wilde's 'intensity' and the serious, empty epicentre of the dhooza technique, is what Meredith referred to when he said 'fervidness is the core of style'.¹⁹ Metaphor not only plumbs levels of consciousness - 'the submerged self - self in the depths'²⁰ - unavailable to other tropes in the novel. Used in Meredith's prose to approximate to the illusion of unstructured thought-processes, it vacillates between being the viewpoint of a character, and that of the observer-narrator. The result is invariably a judgment which, in accordance with the strategies of elliptical selfhood, does not address itself directly to the reader but through the veil of a third element. The reader must re-create the metaphor himself, rehearse it in his own mind.

Meredith defines the limits to and conditions of metaphor and analogy in his prose. That 'fraternity of old lamps for lighting our abysmal darkness'(p.314) will 'spring us to vault' over the difficulties and weak points of the narrative; but the reader must be in the proper frame of mind, the proper intensity of mind to receive them, for 'as with the visits of Immortals, we must be ready to receive them. Beware, moreover, of examining them too scrupulously: they have a trick of wearing to vapour if closely scanned'(p.189). The advice is sound; but the modest claims are ironically self-deprecating. Analogy and metaphor are the book's basic units for communication of selfhood. Nesta, for example, speaking of Mr. Stuart Rem's opposition to her 'secular singing' on Sunday, makes the following simile - "he had the look of a Patriarch putting his hand-maiden away into the desert"(p.356). The image works on a number of levels. It refers, of course, to Mr. Rem's regrets in the face of clerical duty, but it also refers ironically to Victor's attitude in sending Nesta away to his aunts; to the lack of any such feelings in his treatment of Nataly; and to men's attitude in general to women, which in this novel - as in most of Meredith's novels - is a yard-stick for true humanity.

Such images may be static as above, like a multi-stavial chord; or may be a progression of fluent resonances, each with a changed meaning according to context, as is the case with the unnamed Idea. This latter type of metaphor is particularly in evidence in chapters thirty-five and thirty-six, where the characters of Dudley and Victor are illuminated by a scrutiny of their relationships with Nesta in the light of a series of 'old lamps'.

At the start of chapter thirty-five, Dudley's consciousness, his 'internal parliament' (an oblique reference to Victor and his ambitions) is deeply divided about Nesta and her illegitimacy. His doubts are traced to his debilitating necessity to forgive her, which is a sign that he really does not accept her whole person and personality, but only those aspects he wishes to see. The necessity for forgiveness creates a vicious circle of emotion within him: 'far from expungeing the doubt of her, forgiveness gave it a stamp and an edge'(p.415). Nesta has already been characterized as one who rejects 'the stamp of the world'; but Dudley is incapable of this, and consequently misunderstands Nesta - 'more than most girls, she was the girl-Sphinx to him: because of her having ideas - or what he deemed ideas'(p.416). Thus, when he quotes "'to set one's love upon the swallow is a futulity'", Nesta caps it by replying, "'may not the pleasure for us remain if we set our love upon the beauty of the swallow's flight'". Dudley, however, cannot quite grasp Nesta's meaning, misrepresenting it to himself in the present as he muses upon it - 'there was, for a girl, a bit of idea, real idea, in that: meaning, of course, the picture we are to have of the bird's wings in motion; - it has often been admired. Oh! not much of an idea in itself:- feminine and vague. But it was pertinent, opportune'(p.417). Dudley has heard her words, but their subtlety - the importance of beauty as a standard to set against the fluxional chaos - is lost upon him, owing largely to his condescending attitude to women en masse. And this stems directly from a lack of imagination - 'physically, morally, mentally, he read the world through facts... through the facts he encountered'(p.419). Dudley's view of reality consists of only those things he wants to acknowledge. Although he is 'not unimpressible by the hazy things outside his experience', he rejects these unconsidered regions because of 'his presiding mistrust of Nature' - 'he clung to his mistrust the more because of a warning he had from the silenced natural voice: somewhat as we may behold how the Conservatism of a Class, in a world of all the evidences showing that there is

no stay to things, comes of the intuitive discernment of its finality'(p.420). Dudley's mistrust of the world springs, as does Victor's, from a fear of it. In this comparison Meredith points up how complex the destructive energy of such a fear may be: its manifestations in class strife and hatred are derived from the insane attempts to force reality into certain rigid patterns, at the expense of the majority of humanity. In a more extreme form of this - in Victor, for instance - wilfulness turns to solipsism, outer is made wholly conformable to inner, and silence, madness and death are the results.

The following chapter turns to investigate this process in Victor more minutely. It is made nearly explicit in this chapter that his relationship with Nataly now barely goes beyond the common view of women that the book attacks - Victor will 'pay them [his] homage, that they may serve as flowers'(p.424). The floral image is a motif throughout the novel for the condition of women, adapted according to the context. Nataly, for example, likens her surrender to Victor's course of action to 'the detachment of a flower on the river's bank by swell of flood: she had no longer root of her own'(p.51) and, with the sense of her own individualism obscured, she loses 'a notion of steadfastness within or without'. Victor visualizes women as static picturesque flowers, with men as active bees. Dartrey protests against such a chauvinist attitude: "'if you insist on having women rooted to the bed of the river, they'll veer with the tides, like water-weeds'", which, as the earlier image indicates, is precisely what is happening to Nataly. And the same fear manifested in the 'Conservatism of a Class' and in the hypostacized flower is evident in Victor's sense of Nature:

she is a splendid power for as long as we confine her between the banks: but she has a passion to discover cracks; and if we give her headway, she will find one, and drive at it, and be through, uproarious in her primitive licentiousness, unless we labour body and soul like Dutchmen at the dam. (p.425)

It is clear that Victor fears not only nature, but unshackled feminism too; and the natural and female images coalesce in the figure of Sabrina, the ominous first image of the novel.

Marine imagery is used similarly throughout the book to determine motives and describe character; and since it usually deals with the subject of material gain and flux, it defines relationships to these subjects. Thus, Victor slips and falls on London Bridge

and lies 'peaceful for the moment as the uncomplaining who have gone to Sabrina beneath the tides'(p.1). When he is successful and surrounded by admiration he is described as swimming - 'like a swimmer in the morning sea amid the exclamations encircling him'(p.82); his eloquence is to the Duvidney ladies 'as a floodstream'. To Colney Durance he seems at Lakelands to be in the grip of 'an insane itch to be the bobbing cork on the wave of the minute'. Skepsey's motion is described as 'coming swift as the point of an outrigger over the flood'. When Dudley first discovers Nesta's illegitimacy from Nataly his disordered deeper sentiments, mingled relief and sadness, are, punningly, 'a diver's wreck, where an armoured livid subtermarine, a monstrous puff-ball of man, wandered seriously light in heaviness... thinking occasionally, amid the mournful spectacle, of the atmospheric pipe of communication with the world above, whereby he was deafened yet sustained'(p.314). To Nesta at the theatre, having received the news of her mother's death, 'the sound coming from an applausive audience was as much a thunder as rage would have been. It was as void of human meaning as a sea'(p.505). The image is an apt comment on Victor's ambitions. He too, recognizes this dual quality of the thing he desires and fears; but refuses to acknowledge openly his fear because of his desire for it. Nature is therefore to be confined 'between the banks', and in so doing, Victor, like Dudley, suppresses his self. He refuses to open to flux, and attempts to alter reality instead of reflecting on his view of it. Being part of what he represses, he cannot bear to admit the meaninglessness of the activity by which he defines himself. Others around him point this out, however. To Colney, the great occasion at Lakelands only goes to prove that to become '"the idol of the English people"' he must also be its dupe; and he observes Victor, 'all over the field netting his ephemerae! And he who feeds on them, to pay a price for their congratulations and flatteries, he is one of them himself!'(p.246). The narrator, in a rare direct authorial comment, elucidates this further - 'Victor had yet to learn, that the man with a material object in aim, is the man of his object... he is more the arrow of his bow than bow to his arrow'. Both Victor and Dudley, significantly, dislike 'intangible metaphor', and think that reality and experience may be communicated as facts(p.314).

Chapter thirty-six presents the reader with further proofs

of Victor's mad career in society; and these come at a poignant moment, when Nesta has discovered her parents's secret, and is coming to a knowledge of the extent of her father's irrationality. The love between Victor and Nesta is a delicate account of father-daughter love, where Meredith creates tenderness without lapsing into sentimentality. The complex relationship is handled in this chapter in several images, one notoriously cryptic. At her father's appeal, Nesta kisses him, 'and smiling: like the moral crepuscular of a sunlighted day down a not totally inanimate Sunday London street' (p.426). The strategy behind such an image will by now be clear. Because the relationship between the first and second elements of the simile is obscure, the reader is forced to stop and to try to picture the scene described. Like an Impressionist painting, the major element in it is light; and in order to see this particular quality of light the reader must mix the paints in his own mind, as it were; create for his own inner eye the essentially objectless scene. This effort sets up a link between the reader's own sense of self and the confusion of feelings that Nesta undergoes at this moment. The image itself, in so far as it might be created in other words, calls up feelings of nostalgia, forbearance, affection. It aims at conveying the

foisonnement innombrable de sensations, d'images, de sentiments, de souvenirs, d'impulsions, de petits actes larvés qu'aucun langage intérieur n'exprime, qui se bousculent aux portes de la conscience, s'assemblent en groupes compacts et surgissent tout à coup, se défont aussitôt, se combinent autrement et réapparaissent sous une nouvelle forme, tandis que continue à se dérouler en nous, pareil au ruban qui s'échappe en crépitant de la fente d'un téléscripateur, le flot interrompu des mots.²¹

This fecundity which underlies a character's language is indicative of the unanalyzable and ultimately inexpressible immediate response of the entire self to experience. Speech can never adequately embody signs of this inner reality, which may be more faithfully indicated by bodily signs, such as a smile. But to convey the inner reality of Nesta's smile to us, Meredith has recourse to what seems at first a grotesquely extended analogy. Yet to say that this is wilful obscurity or a poetic device misses the whole point of the description. Meredith is pushing hard at the limits of novelistic fiction, trying to make the reader see differently, read differently, understand more

deeply. It is device analogous to Marlow's urge to convey the aura of his tale, instead of merely re-telling its facts. To take part in such a strenuous exercise the reader must analyse the imagery; narrative guidelines and pointers are less apparent, less immediately available; but the final effect is all the stronger for it. One might compare this analogy, with its sense of distancing precision, with analogies that convey precise inexactnesses in chapters thirty-five and thirty six (pp.421, 431). There, the description of action is purposely circuitous and clumsy, and, with its aptly vague futurity, an accurate description of the action proposed.

The chapter ends with various death-wishes - Victor for that of Mrs. Burman and the Member of Parliament, Dudley for his brother and father, Nataly for her own. Victor comments on this in a manner that recalls Marlow's ironic contrast of the hell of the jungle to civilized London life - 'odd, one fancies it, that we walking along the pavement of civilized life, should be perpetually summoning Orcus to our aid, for the sake of getting a clear course.

"And supposing a fog, my dearie?" he said' (pp.435-6). Hints of the nether world and the "'fog'" of Victor's discourse echo the gas-bladders, bubble-empires and gloomy circle of lamps at the start of the chapter, as the analogy of pavement-walking to life recalls primary fall and Sabrina in the book's first sentence, and are symbolic of Victor's progress and spiritual state. The fog question draws from Nesta the image of a daughter seeking her father with a lamp, which is taken up in the next chapter as Diogenes's lantern, and echoed in the 'old lamps' of the book's self-acknowledged main narrative device.

Like Victor's Idea, the imagery in the novel as a whole is infans, requiring extensive interpretation by the reader, and mediation in his mind not only between images but also between the images and his experience of what they indicate in the realm of feeling and social relations. Only then does the function and the fuller contextual meaning of the image appear. Meredith takes this technique to its uttermost in his use of musical imagery in the narrative. It is an interest in music, and specifically in opera, that draws together the diverse activities and hobby-horses of the characters. Music presents them with a second language, more coherent than speech, more articulate in its verbal absence: 'as much as wine,

will music bring out the native bent of the civilized man: endow him with language too' (p.172). And Mrs. Marsett tells Nesta, "when I hear beautiful singing, even from a woman they tell tales of, upon my word, it's true, I feel my sins all melting out of me and I'm new-made" (p.342). Opera, as a number of contemporary writers realized, offers a mediation between action and fluid 'internal history';²² between chronology and its exigencies of plot, and the logic of internal consciousness. More specifically, operatic form provides a larger narrative design for the novel than any other image cluster except the Idea; and is indeed a macrocosm of the image in its form, and of the Idea in its content. Its continuous form is more suited to the fluid dynamic of emotion than the discrete units of meaning that constitute words. The notion created by music is a felt notion which transcends that of Vorstellung, or representation to consciousness. In it, internal consciousness is intensified, and the false Cartesian dichotomy between objective and subjective may be temporarily abolished, for in listening to music we are least aware of boundaries between inner and outer. As Pater knew, in such a condition time may be apprehended together with eternity; life with death; time with being; change with permanence. Each of these dualities - whose conflict surfaces in every major character in the novel - are dualities no longer, but heard and felt as a monistic one. Meredith's metaphoric devices - the sea, the Idea, music itself, and much else - all aspire to this condition of music, not only in a narrative that barely seems to move, but in polyphonic, multi-stavial imagery. For Meredith, only in such complexity, almost indecipherable at times, can the full complexity of selfhood be indicated.

Meredith's use of metaphor to implicate the reader closely in the text is complemented in this novel by the ellipticism of his narrative strategy, which may at times appear evasively non-competent or even irresponsible. It is the problem of the elliptical self, however, which causes Meredith to adopt narrative devices which will relay inner processes to the reader, and compel him to realize the extraordinary activity, complexity and passion within these processes. Thus, in chapter six for example, Nataly is being persuaded by Victor of the immanence of Mrs. Burman's forgiveness of them; or rather, she is allowing her self to be persuaded:

the histrionic self-deceiver may be a persuasive deceiver of another, who is again, though not ignorant of his character, tempted to swallow the nostrums which have made so gallant a man of him: his imperceptible sensible playing of the part, on a substratum of sincerity, induces fascinatingly to the like performance on our side, that we may be armed as he is for enjoying the coveted reality through the partial simulation of possessing it. And this is not a task to us when we have looked our actor in the face, and seen him bear the look, knowing that he is not intentionally untruthful; and when we incline to be captivated by his rare theatrical air of confidence; when it seems as an outside thought striking us, that he may not be altogether deceived in the present instance; when suddenly an expectation of the thing desired is born and swims in a credible featureless vagueness on a misty scene: and when we are being kissed and the blood is warmed. In fine, here as everywhere along our history, when the sensations are spirited up to drown the mind, we become drift-matter of tides, metal to magnets. And if we are women, who commonly allow the lead to men, getting it for themselves only by snaky cunning or desperate adventure, credulity - the continued trust in man - is the alternative of despair. (pp.55-6).

The paragraph is a narrative tour de force. Meredith's narrator, 'we', is never fixed, but flows into almost every character, and while talking to the reader, never directly addresses him with a moral judgment. Here, as in the novel at large, the narratorial 'we' serves to heighten our awareness as readers, with its constant changes of persona; it does not, as in Tess, rest primarily in the condition of observing the novel's action; nor will it pretend in the tradition of Victorian realism, that the world of the novel is actual life plus omniscience. At Lakelands, for example, it mimics the syntax and speech rhythms of working class, middle class and gentry in three paragraphs that describe the general levels of reaction to Victor's lavish occasion (pp.228-30), and in doing so, emphasizes the distance between it - 'we' - and what both the reader and it observes. But it is not a reliable narrator, in the sense that it is a stable point of view. The 'we' is not bland camaraderie, but an oblique sign of contradiction. As readers we rarely disagree with it; but we are uncomfortable with it all the same. Like the Idea, it too is elusive: it may take up any persona, speak with indignation, pity, irony humour; is finally unnamed. Here, it hovers, now close to Nataly's local predicament - 'we have looked our actor in the face' - now on the more abstract plane of generalization - 'we become drift-matter of tides'. Throughout the movement of the scene - Victor talking to Nataly, recognizing his influence, recognizing her recognition of it, taking her in his arms to seal his 'victory' in an embrace, kissing her - the 'we' removes the

reader from the action proper (while yet chronicling what happens) by focussing on motivation, and speaking partly through Nataly's consciousness of the scene, and partly through her much deeper unconscious feelings of guilt at what she senses must be the inevitable consequences of her submission. In this latter voice, the 'we' adopts a more general tone (especially in the last sentence) which allows the reader to glimpse the implications of the scene for the position of women in 'our' society. Each 'we' relies on metaphor to say what it wants to express, and its shifting personae deftly disguise the moral undertow by implicating the reader in the motives behind the action. The 'we' never detaches itself from character and outrightly condemns Victor's lie or Nataly's passivity and submission, but acts as a bridge between reader and character, making of us a 'hypocrite lecteur', exposing us as voyeurs, compelling us to identify strongly with the point of view adopted - here, that of Nataly.

And we come to see how Nataly can be persuaded by a lie that she knows only too well to be a lie. The 'thing desired' is not only the thing itself, but also the desire for the thing, its 'expectation'. Nataly wills herself persuaded; it is she who persuades her self, not Victor. It seems to us - we are with Nataly - 'as an outside thought striking us' because Nataly desires outward confirmation of what she inwardly wants to feel, as a sign that this inward desire is contiguous with reality. To merge the two requires all the vagueness she can muster, in order to veil the truth of the facts in plausible impossibilities; and - described in a series of typical aquatic images - she surrenders her self to her 'sensations': in other words, her desire. The final sentence, linking Nataly's predicament in these instants to the position of women generally in society, also reveals the dark other side of such credulity - it is but the 'alternative of despair'. Men such as Victor, dynamically active, naive in the belief that all he does must be for the best because he too a self-deceiver (see p.290) wants to believe it so, present women such as Nataly with a bare choice that is really no choice at all, but a demand for complicity.

That so eloquent a novel as One of Our Conquerors should powerfully convey such a pessimistic lack of communication is the book's most extended and stimulating paradox; and one which is - in a further, matroshka-doll paradox that is, as we have seen, so typical of literature concerned with this type of selfhood - both

statement of the problem and its own answer. This can be seen at work in Meredith's creation of Victor and Nesta respectively.

It is made clear throughout the novel that Victor does love Nataly; yet it becomes equally clear that, in sustaining a lie through absence of communication, both partners are destroying themselves. The withering of their love is one instance among many others that indicates the inarticulateness of language, the inadequacy of speech to embody what we really mean, and all that we want to say. The recognition of love between Nesta and Dartrey is significantly wordless - 'she had not a thought of the word of love or the being beloved' (p.459) - and is appropriately described in terms of light; but the alienation between Victor and Nataly, taking place as it does in the midst of their love, is inarticulate and unspoken. The silence of Nesta's moment is identical to that silence upon which music depends for its harmony and movement; the silence between Victor and Nataly upon the subject of their growing alienation is analogous to that of madness and death - a want of coherence and harmony. It is symbolized in its extremity, by the gilt figure of Cupid on a clock that Victor had bought for Mrs. Burman, and catches sight of when Nataly and he visit her. Later he reflects that 'the time-piece was all astray, the Cupid regular on the swing:- strange, touching, terrible, if really the silly gilt figure symbolized!.... And we are a silly figure to be sitting in a cab imagining such things!' (p.491) Victor shies away from reflection on, and analysis of, his motives: and his reason here is pointed to by the punning omission of 'gilt' in his repetition.

The connection between the lie that is prompted by guilt and Victor's inability to grasp his Idea is made apparent in the penultimate chapter, as the narrator promised us - in retrospect, with grim irony - at the start. Victor declares,

'I speak at my Meeting tomorrow and am a champagne-bottle of notes and points for them'.

His lost Idea drew close to him in sleep: or he thought so, when awaking to the conception of a people solidified, rich and poor, by the common pride of simple manhood. (p.493)

But in his Idea 'the people were in drab, not a shining army on the march to meet the Future' (p.493). The champagne-bottle metaphor

points to the reason for such a want of vision, referring as it does to the rare and expensive Old Veuve of chapter two (the epitome of indulgence and class distinction based on money); and on a more personal level too, alluding darkly to Mrs. Burman. Victor contradicts himself in his personal life as in his Idea. For all his dreams of a united nation, he secretly despises and fears the masses he moves among so confidently. This is shown him first in the sharp exchange on London Bridge - "and none of your damned punctilio" - and then by his reaction to Nesta's demolition of the Lakelands scheme. After that, Victor consciously begins to fear his daughter; and his Idea remains as elusive as ever: 'his bath water chilled. He jumped out and rubbed furiously with his towels and flesh-brushes, chasing the Idea for simple warmth, to have Something inside him, to feel just that sustainment; with the cry: but no one can say I do not love my Nataly!' (p.494) Victor has become one of the hollow men, and like Kurtz, sees himself as one "not to be questioned like other men" (p.494) - an attitude as self-contradictory, and ultimately as devoid of any meaning, as Kurtz's pamphlet on human rights. His guilt at forcing his schemes on Nataly, and at flirting with Lady Grace Halley, causes him to cry out to himself, 'my love of her is testified by my having Barmby handy to right her today, tomorrow, the very instant the clock strikes the hour of my release!' (p.495) Like Dudley, Victor attaches signification to the fact of acts alone, and refuses to consider motivation. But his unconscious does this for him, and asserts itself in the slow crumbling of his sense of self, revealing to him the nightmarish end of all his schemes and plans - 'mention of the clock swung that silly gilt figure. Victor entered into it, condemned to swing, and be a thrall. His intensity of sensation launched him on an eternity of the swinging in ridiculous nakedness to the measure of time gone crazy' (p.495). Refusing to acknowledge the confused admixture of selfish and altruistic motives within him, Victor begins to question the very nature of reality around him: "I'm always pleased to find a decent reason for what is", he said. Then he queried: "But what is, if we look at it, and while we look, Simeon?" (p.499) The question hints on one level at the threat of fragmentation which causes Victor to cling to his Idea as the one assurance of the seamless unity of reality and experience. Victor would believe it

an Absolute in a contingent world, which is why he is always dissatisfied with its appearances; but it functions as an assurance only, a placebo against the all-pervasive '"damned punctilio"'. His question also points to the flux of material things, and to his own limitless and contradictory ambitions. He would create a brotherhood based on aristocracy; he both loves and wounds Nataly; he wishes to feel and to analyse experience simultaneously, like Kurtz.

It is Nesta who demonstrates the impossible contradictions in Victor's schemes, and the folly of this last desire, in her frank responsiveness to experience and the world. While never rejecting either facts or systematic reason, she transcends them by recognizing that they are insufficient in themselves. Like her creator, she realizes that the brainstuff of life, as of fiction, is internal history.²³ She comes closest to a pre-logical, pre-cognitive, subconscious immediate experience in her sentient nature and spontaneous feeling, and in her freedom from 'the stamp of the world' - as, for example, when she and Dartrey wordlessly pledge themselves to each other. Such communication that Nesta and Dartrey attain is open to the other characters only through the temporarily liberating power of music, which - though only at the actual moment of communication - becomes a second, unfallen language. The character of Nesta is perhaps the book's finest achievement, for Meredith succeeded in creating an irresistible personality in a natural girl, innocent but wise, one who passes through the world untainted, but who learns from experience how to recognize and defeat the world's hypocrisy and its threatening chaos. Throughout this education she holds onto the Idea which the figure of St. Louis inspires in her:

with such a King, there would be union of the old order and the new, cessation to political turmoil: Radicalism, Socialism, all the monster names of things with heads agape in these our days to gobble-up the venerable, obliterate the beautiful, leave a stoniness of floods where field and garden were, would be appeased, transfigured. (p.179)

Her vision here and elsewhere is perhaps the closest we ever get to Victor's Idea. Nesta's vision, however, depends upon a radical transfiguration of basic terms and conventional models, such as Wilde carried out in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'. By thus avoiding clichéd thought, she avoids the world's prejudices, and

can see her way to an original solution to the major evils in society.

This is made clear by the shadowy figure of Mrs. Marsett who, more than any other character, is created not to give us the traditional novelistic illusion that she lives among us, but as all the major characters of the novel see her. At times she is a caricature of the 'fallen woman' - to Nataly, for instance. At other times she is portrayed with penetrating psychological insight, as we read Nesta's view of her. Again, to the Duvidney ladies she is simply a respectable woman because of her respectable county name (p.343). She is, in fact, a metaphorical test-case for the opinion of each character on the place of woman in society; and it is Nesta who responds positively and actively to her predicament. To Nesta, she is not a social outcast, a 'fallen woman', but a person suffering unnecessary pain and misery. She recognizes Mrs. Marsett's unique otherness and thus enters into her suffering. In doing so, she bypasses the solipsistic procedure of labelling her a fallen woman in order to evade responsibility for action: "'the very meaning of having a heart, is to suffer through others or for them'" (p.453). Such acknowledgment of another's individuality, as Wilde and Bradley both indicate, starts the inevitable slide towards sympathy for the other, and a realization (which Skepsey and Dartrey gain in other ways) of the self's existential responsibility in every decision, and in taking account of all available experience. In Idealist terms, Nesta has discerned that all action is self-realization, and is therefore comprehensible not as a static a priori category, but as a continual effort to 'choose'. She goes to the root of the social problem too: a woman is not allowed to assume responsibility for her actions by the conventional world of society, which is satisfied only if she is a 'happy composition', and not an 'organic growth' (p.354).

It is an opposition of stasis and motion, death and life, Victor's pursuit of an Idea, Nesta's realization of a vision. At its heart lies the opposition of self-assertion and self-sacrifice.²⁴ Victor's Idea exists as pure potential and like Victor himself, seeks to be limitlessly harmonious and extensive. To do so it must continually be asserted, imposed upon reality. Nesta's vision is a recognition of herself as a merely fragmented phenomenon desiring a greater unity, which propels her into action on behalf of all other partial beings. Victor believes his ideal to be self-sacrificing, whereas

all he succeeds in doing in the novel is asserting his self's ambitions and projecting its solipsistic terrors. By self-sacrifice, and action based on the necessity for the self's ultimate responsibility for its self, Nesta paradoxically comes to realize the unity inherent in the Idealist values of comprehensiveness and system. And through such action the Idea exists: it cannot be described, for description distorts through definition, through 'the stamp of the world'. Like the self, it may only be indicated, by the analogic, catachrestic power of metaphor.

Such is the case with Nesta's own consciousness. On only a very few occasions does the shifting narrator actually become Nesta and allow us to enter the workings of her consciousness. Elsewhere, her state of mind, described from the outside, is made an enigma to the reader. Like Marlow's tale and Victor's Idea she is indescribable in any direct way, and we may only be given a glimpse, a sense of her selfhood through metaphor and analogy. Like the Idea it must remain sealed off from any direct access. But there is a crucial difference here in the nature of this inaccessibility. If we as readers cannot penetrate the Idea, it is because we only see it through the limited and limiting consciousnesses of Victor and other characters. Nesta's consciousness remains impenetrable because it is the book's Absolute, its Ideal, and, if described, would lend itself to distortion and become an appearance, not reality. It would, in the words of Wilde's Gilbert, have become "simply a new starting-point that is other than itself".²⁵ Unrecognizable and therefore unnamed, she stimulates, and does not absolve the reader from, active responsibility. To apprehend the true nature of her consciousness at least in part, the reader must enter into the narrative with a willingness to draw upon his own experience (in particular his knowledge of innocent wisdom), must recognize his own imaginative involvement as a responsible, existing social being in the issues taken up. In the full Idealist sense he cannot experience within the limits of the novel what he has not experienced in his life beyond it.

And yet the situation in the novel is not as simple as this. As Wilde pointed out, nature imitates art: our perceptions of the world are subtly influenced by our aesthetic conceptions. It is more to the point to say that whatever experience we contain in ourselves is modified, re-shaped by the act of reading. And the reader in Meredith's

novels frequently finds himself called upon not merely to interpret, but also to create using his own aesthetic faculties. It is a remarkably daring experiment, and proof that Meredith, for all he was sceptical of his contemporary reader's abilities, never himself lost faith in art's capacity to expand the categories of the mind. As he said in the Preface to The Egoist, 'art is the specific'. A conservative plot with conventional characters, using archaic linguistic concepts of the self, allows the reader to escape responsibility in reading. A didactic novel, earnestly seeking to cure, produces the same effect. In One of Our Conquerors, and particularly in his treatment of Nesta, Meredith attempts a radical re-shaping of conventional views on art and ethics. By his refusal to adopt the persona of her consciousness, Meredith makes Nesta embody the book's despair at the continual relapse of fallen language into solipsism. As the book's ideal, Nesta may be only indicated, not stated. But language is not irredeemable: Nesta also embodies the novel's answer to the verbum infans. More than any other idea or character in the book she exists for the reader through the power of metaphor, and exhibits the great strengths and flaws of that device. She is made marvellously vivid and appealing, but only through the agency of an exhausting - though admittedly exhilarating - effort on the part of the reader. In this at least, Nesta, with her capacity to open herself to the fecund perceptions and conceptions of imagination, provides the reader with a paradigm for the experience of reading her and the novel -

above all, she flew her blind quickened heart on the wings of an imaginative force; and those of the young who can do that, are in their blood incorruptible by dark knowledge, irradiated under darkness in the mind. Let but the throb be kept for others. That is the one secret, for redemption, if not for preservation. (pp.355-6)

Nesta achieves both, by realizing that

The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
 For the pattern is new in every moment
 And every moment is a new and shocking
 Valuation of all we have been.²⁶

Conclusion

Both Conrad and Meredith are deeply concerned in these works to say what the model of the self actually is. However, in articulating their sense of the self as a dynamic self-creation they are both absorbed by a basic problem inherent in such a view. Either one postulates a metaphysical entity, which then assures him of the continuity of the self, ignoring its ever-changing nature; or one emphasizes the empirical data which assert the flux of the self but which will not explain its unity and continuity. The problem is fundamentally that of the self in regard to the one and the many. How can one talk of the unity of the self, yet recognize that the self constantly experiences changed and changing states? How can one express the apparent experiential fact that the self is simultaneously one and many? And how can the self be both changing and unchanging if it is neither one thing nor the other?

The answer that Conrad and Meredith give in the novels examined here is one that breaks down the dualism of monistic and pluralistic selves. Instead of postulating the self as either fixed or unfixed, they see it as a relationship to itself and to all other things. This view is a crucial determinant of the two texts here, for both novels are taken up with the difficulties of presenting the struggle of various characters who both embody this model of the self, and who react against it. These devices considerably determine the literary devices in the novels. Both Kurtz and Victor are characters who react against this model, treating the self as fixed, a permanent substance to which changeable accidents inhere: both are unable to resist forcing others into satisfying a desire, thus affirming personal imperialism: both are, paradoxically, hollow in their substantially egoistic eloquence. Their conviction that the self must engage with the world in such dualistic conflict is nothing short of epistemological suicide; and the effort to describe and convey the pattern behind this pattern - which is in effect no pattern at all, mere self-lessness - leads the authors inevitably into an exploration of the realm of silence that speech fills. Such an experience cannot be described directly in the novels but only indicated, for it is not the silence that orders meaning, in music for example, but a silence that is

significant of the absolute lack of coherence: dread, madness, psychosis.

But de profundis in Kurtz and Marlow, and chiasmically in Nesta and Victor, a conception of selfhood is worked out in the novels that may exist as a saner model for the experience of living in a cacophonous world. In this model, the self is a relation which relates its self to its own self; and paradoxically, this apparently narcissistic and self-enclosed model gives rise to those self-sacrificing acts which both Kurtz and Victor know at the first and last to be the highest good, but are prevented by their own conviction of selfhood from carrying out. In so becoming, and being aware of becoming, the self is free; for in this model that both authors deal with, becoming has to do with the transition from possibility to actuality, and this must emerge in freedom. Of course, Kurtz and Marlow, Victor and Nesta, all treat the self as having the possibility of free choice; but their conception of this freedom and its uses are very different. Kurtz and Victor see the self's freedom as being a perpetual movement from actuality to possibility: in their eyes, the self must continually reassert its freedom in the toils of a trammeling world. Marlow and Nesta view freedom as the movement from possibility to actuality. Where Kurtz and Victor (Kurtz is merely the illogical extreme of Victor's attitude) seek to abrogate responsibility, both for the self and others, Marlow and Nesta seek to establish that freedom which is the real root of guilt and innocence - a freedom which Alvan Hervey comes to recognize, too late. If the individual may be brought to accept responsibility for his existence - in existential terms, to be essentially guilty - then innocence and guilt become meaningful categories. Thus, once freedom has been secured, the individual must in freedom choose what self he will become. He must choose the telos of his life, and in the purposive activity of choosing his self, he affirms his selfhood. Thereby, the paradoxical, simultaneous movement from self-affirmation to self-sacrifice, exemplified in Marlow's compassion and Nesta's redemption of Mrs. Marsett, comes into being. Kurtz and Victor refuse, through fear of the consequences, to relinquish the position of absolute possibility. Consequently, Kurtz becomes inarticulate in his divine freedom, and Victor is imprisoned, like the animals in Regent's Park Zoo, in his wealth and repressed fears of exposure. As we have seen, neither defines the self in experience, but takes

his self to be an ordained, atemporal substance. Neither wants to know that there is no freedom of will in the abstract; and both of them, in their conviction that one may will one's own freedom of will, reify the will-to-freedom as a constative entity. Marlow and Nesta, on the contrary, hold that it is only by willing purposefully, and incessantly striving to make new sense of perplexing issues (no mere work ethic) that freedom of will is affirmed: their concept of self is performative. Both are aware that, otherwise, selfhood is vapourized in possibility, for the self that is indeterminant can never become a sure self. Nataly is a case in point: she loves travelling because it induces a narcotic, forgetful condition, as of 'living ever so little ahead of ourselves' (p.149).²⁷

Both novels are taken up with presenting the struggle between these two models of selfhood. In each, the model of self as self-relation is clearly indicated as the superior model to the reader, because of its openness to experience. To describe this self directly is to fail to communicate the nature of its self-relation to the reader. Hence, Conrad and Meredith are faced with the same problem of communicating this model of the self as they face describing the disintegrating selves of Kurtz and Victor - only in inverse. This problem lies at the heart of each author's decision to mask the clarity of the narrative voice. Both Conrad's shadowy, fundamental narrator and the reportage of Marlow, and Meredith's shifting, disturbing narrative voices are attempts to slough the insidious haze of auctoritas which envelopes a novel's kernel; are attempts to break in upon the bland trust with which the reader receives the fictional text. Such trust resides above all on familiar structures of selfhood that create character and action. In presenting new structures, Meredith and Conrad were compelled to adopt new fictional and rhetorical devices to accommodate them in narrative form, character and incident. Each author, aware of the metaphoric nature of selfhood, and aware, too, of the model he was creating, felt the need to ground the solution to balanced selfhood in his novel in the ability to communicate self-relation by means of metaphor and catachresis. It is because of this dual awareness of their models of selfhood in these novels, and their success in realizing them fictionally, that both Conrad and Meredith created successful works of fiction.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. Collected Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad, 21 vols. (London, 1946-55), Almayer's Folly and Tales of Unrest (London, 1947), p.viii. Further references are given in the text.
2. Letters from Conrad, 1895-1924, ed. by Edward Garnett ; (Indianapolis, 1928), p.94.
3. Under Western Eyes (London, 1947), p.14.
4. 'Heart of Darkness' (London, 1946), p.96. Further references are given after quotations in the text.
5. Joseph Conrad's Letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham, ed. by C.T. Watts (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 70-71.
6. Joseph Conrad on Fiction, ed. by Walter F. Wright (Lincoln, 1964), p.160.
7. Ibid., p.168.
8. Pater, op.cit., p.189.
9. Op.cit., pp.84-5.
10. Edward Said, in Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography (Harvard, 1966), p.103, mentions this aspect of Bradley's ethics in relation to Kurtz, but we draw different conclusions - for example, I think it is unclear whether any references Conrad may or may not have intended to Bradley are 'obviously barbed': Conrad's attitude is more ambivalent.
11. Essays on Truth and Reality (Oxford, 1914), p.436, and passim.
12. Compare Bradley, Ethical Studies (Oxford, 1927), Essay II, p.65.
13. One of Our Conquerors, ed. by Margaret Harris (Queensland, 1975), p.433. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
14. Diana of the Crossways, Memorial Edition (London, 1910), p.19.
15. The Artist as Critic, op.cit., p.281.
16. Graves, op.cit., p.251.
17. The Letters of George Meredith, ed. by C.L. Cline, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1970), III, pp.1360-61. See also II, p.744.
18. Turbayne, op.cit., p.3, quoting Gilbert Ryle.
19. Celt and Saxon, Memorial Edition (London, 1910), p.175.
20. Sandra Belloni, Memorial Edition, 2 vols. (London, 1910), vol. II, p.419.
21. Nathalie Sarraute, L'Ère du soupçon; essais sur le roman, Les Essais, LXXX (Paris, 1956), pp.96-8.
22. Diana of the Crossways, op.cit., p.17.

23. Ibid., p.17.
24. Compare Ethical Studies, Essay VII, passim.
25. The Artist as Critic, op.cit., p.370.
26. T.S. Eliot, 'Four Quartets', East Coker, II, in The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot (London, 1977), p.179.
27. For discussion of performative and constative utterances, see J.L. Austin, Philosophical Papers, second edition (Oxford, 1970), pp.233-53.

CHAPTER THREE THE NARCISSISTIC SELF

'Neither at things, nor at people should one look. Only in mirrors should one look, for mirrors do but show us masks'.

— Oscar Wilde, Salome, (Herod log.), Complete Works, op.cit., p.571.

i. The Picture of Dorian Gray: The Narcotic Self

What is a 'narcissistic' self? It is the function of the next few pages to define this model of selfhood, and to indicate how the model may be embodied by a literary work. It must be clearly understood, however, that a text may deal with a narcissistic model of selfhood, yet not be itself a narcissistic text. The importance of this difference will become clear when I discuss the literary value of the texts examined here.

In the last chapter we saw how a self may relate itself to its own self by purposeful willing, and by remaining open to perplexing issues and new experience. This necessarily entails constructing ideals and an ideal to which the self may aspire. Such an activity is not without its dangers, and when this self-relation begins, a number of potential problems arise. The self may mistake the character of its ideal; or may attempt to realise it under the wrong psychological and temporal conditions (nostalgia); or it may seek the ideal in atemporal, indeterminate possibility (narcissism).

In psychological terms, narcissism is the condition that arises when the self exhibits excessive self-love for itself. The erotic impulses are removed from the love-object in this process, and are transferred to the self, creating a state of intact self-sufficiency. This self-sufficiency also contains self-hate, for the narcissist transfers to himself feelings of resentment and fear that often accompany strong feelings of love. However, in loving itself, this self cannot afford to criticize itself. Instead it indulges in ceaseless redefinition of itself. This combination of withdrawal of commitment to an external love-object, together with the continual redefinition of the self in indeterminacy produces pain but no cataclysmic malaise. Narcissism, therefore, seldom creates the conditions which might promote its own destruction.

One psychiatrist has described the major traits of narcissistic persons: they

present an unusual degree of self-reference in their interactions with other people, a great need to be loved and admired by others and a curious contradiction between a very inflated concept of themselves and an inordinate need for tribute from others. Their emotional life is shallow... The main characteristics of the narcissistic personalities are grandiosity, extreme self-centredness, and a remarkable absence of interest in and empathy for others in spite of the fact that they are so very eager to obtain admiration and approval from other people.¹

These psychological traits indicate the strange relation that exists between the narcissist and the world. Within this relation, a number of curious inversions take place that are important for the artistic re-creation of narcissism; and it is to these inversions I shall now turn.

Unlike the stable self of, for instance, NESTA Radnor, the narcissistic self feels it must recognize reality if it is to know who it is; knowledge of the self, it feels, depends on an ability to find the self in the external world, and therefore it is convinced that there is no such stable entity as a self. This lack of stability which it 'finds' in things reveals nothing inherent about the quality of external reality. Instead, lack of stability impresses the narcissistic self with its own incapacity to resist the world's strangeness by appearing to prove that, whether in res cogitans or res extensa, there is no substantive ground in nature. Nature (*φύσις*) is then understood purely as manifestation (*φάνεσθαι*), not as a manifestation of something. Since truth and reality are always beyond the supposed self, such a self can only wait or search for revelations meaningful enough to count as Life. Thus, reality is perpetually transformed into a glamorous, erotic, admiring Reality, a mirror for the revelations the self wishes. The desire to void the self of everything personal, therefore, to present a blissful tabula rasa on which Life's revelations may be scored, is the mere accompaniment of the desire to find the intensely personal equivalent of an image carefully constructed by, and revelatory of, the self's fantasies. As asceticism can be the accompaniment of hedonism, so extreme impersonality is the corollary of such selfish recognition. Narcissism collapses opposites.

Unable to attach any feelings of selfhood to a definite model of self, the narcissist lives in a series of discontinuous

states, a repetitious everpresent. If the self in its pure potential is not continuous, then time loses its continuity and duration for the self. The narcissistic self then ceases to experience the passing of time as duration because it cannot apprehend its identity as that which accumulates and persists in time. Self-identity appears to it as a series of pictures; and there are blanks between the imaginary portraits. The narcissistic self is, at all costs, indeterminate, but it cannot feel itself as anything else because of such gaps or indeterminacies. No one has a continuous, cinematic view of time and existence, of course; but conversely, it is unusual, not to say abnormal, to think of the self as a series of unchanging, static icons. After all, it is the memory of a changing, changed self that paradoxically lends weight to the concept of permanent selfhood. But no matter how much it changes, the narcissistic self often appears to itself as a series of pictures; and memory becomes a series of mnemonic touchstones. In narcissism, as in nostalgia, there is no single, continuous history; between two moments in time there is the same discontinuity as between two portraits in space. Time becomes a function of rebirths and deaths, not a process of accretion and development. Having no history, isolated in time and space, the narcissistic self can at best feel itself as uncertain; at worst, as non-existent.

Wilde's only novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray, explores these inversions and paradoxes in its portrayal of a model of narcissistic selfhood. As we have seen in chapter one, Wilde's model of selfhood in his critical dialogues and essays was one where the self remained in a state of pure possibility. The novel can be seen as Wilde's attempt to chart, given a certain set of circumstances, one result of the self's existence in such indeterminacy. Despite the novel's serious flaws - which will be analysed below - its insight into the important cruxes of narcissistic selfhood is striking, and binds together the novel's disparate elements, its flaws and strengths. My main contention here, then, is that the weaknesses and strengths of the novel arise from its particular model of narcissistic selfhood.

The earliest detailed instance of narcissism in the novel occurs when Dorian looks at his portrait for the first time - 'a look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognized himself for the

first time... The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before'.² Narcissus is gazing at Narcissus, and the point is reinforced in the first chapter by the play made in the context upon the reflexive pronouns, with their attendant ironies - "'well, as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished, and framed, and sent home. Then you can do what you like with yourself'" (p.27). Dorian has already become fixed in a work of art, prefiguring the transmutation of his temporal life into an eternal objet d'art. This unbridgeable gap between life and art is a projection in the novel for the self's alternative of either choosing its self, or remaining in possibility. Lord Henry Wotton, with penetrating vision, sees to the heart of the matter, the self's fear and dread of losing itself in the act of choosing, while omitting to mention that his eudaemonic solution merely placates the dread temporarily, and cannot eradicate it: "'the aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly - that is what each of us is here for. People are afraid of themselves, nowadays'" (p.17). Society is seen as essentially repressive and suppresses any attempt at self-development - "'the terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion - these are the two things that govern us'" (p.17). Lord Henry's solution to the ills of contemporary society lies in his ideal of self-culture. But his self-culture, his "'new Hedonism'" is in effect a perverted version of Wilde's view of individualism, described in chapter one; a version in which the self is regarded rather as an instrument for myriad sensation, after the fashion of Huysmans's *des Esseintes*. Like the egotists in 'The Soul of Man', Lord Henry enjoys wielding influence over another person, and feels jealous when Dorian tells him of his love for Sybil (who in turn is under the influence of Dorian). He seeks to own Dorian as he sought to own Dorian's portrait, and what he says when talking of faithfulness in love applies to his own attitude towards Dorian - "'the passion for property is in it'" (p.49). The cold calculator, Lord Henry is a sophisticated version of the narcissistic illusion of self-sufficiency. He lives vicariously through his creation, Dorian, and his motive for doing so is a selfish narcissism - 'to project one's soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the added music of passion and youth... there was a real joy in that' (p.35). Perfection of reflection is thereby achieved,

as the pool testifies in Wilde's parable, The Disciple - "'but I loved Narcissus because, as he lay on my banks and looked down at me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw ever my own beauty mirrored"'³. Perhaps the most telling criticism of the insufficiency of Lord Henry's cynical temperament lies in his own creation, the self of Dorian.

Dorian is represented as a person with infinite potentialities all through the book. He has what everyone desires - beauty, wealth and - unlike Tennyson's Tithonus - eternal youth. In order to complete his iconic quality, he must have no history - after all, the artistic power in the myth of Narcissus lies in the single unique visual image of the youth prone beside the pool, as Housman's poems, XV and XX from A Shropshire Lad indicate. But rumours of Dorian's background and his orphaned childhood gleaned from his uncle cause Lord Henry to meditate that there 'was something fascinating in this son of Love and Death' (p.36). The narcissistic and orphic drives - Eros and Thanatos - which motivate Dorian are alluded to here, but in another sense these powers are Dorian's true parents. "'You will always be loved, and you will always be in love with love"', declares Lord Henry who, on account of his own self-absorption, is rarely wrong in his perceptions on narcissism (p.48). The truth of his statement lies in its ironic Augustinian echo, and most of all in its omission - Dorian does not love. He is an iconic symbol of perfection. A mirror turned upon what he thinks he desires in the world, is all the self he wants. But this very self-consciousness creates another, secretive self, the real motive for the frigid dandy, which requires a perfect love from everyone around him. Sybil is adored by Dorian because she is perfection, one that is greater than his own because it exists in art and therefore transcends the ultimate defeat by death, under whose sceptre Dorian still assumes himself to be. She is the perfect narcissistic ideal, and it is fitting that she should be referred to by other characters as a child, that paragon of narcissistic love - "'there is something of a child about her"' (p.53). A natural innocent, described in flower images, she lives in a world of art: Dorian says "'she regarded me merely as a person in a play"' (p.53). This is her main fascination for Dorian, who at one point describes her in language identical to Pater's famous evocation of La Gioconda. The narcissus serves to link the two characters: "'we kissed each other... she trembled all over, and shook like a white narcissus"' (pp.75-6). Sybil is doubly a white narcissus: she possesses the unself-conscious, self-absorbing

love of a child when she is on the stage, and in her roles of child and actress she is a perfect model of intact narcissism (the figure reappears in Moore's and Symons's work). Dorian sees in this a reflection of his own perfection, just as she sees in Dorian a realization of her own fantasies. Each character talks of love, but, caught up in their respective self-conscious and unself-conscious narcissism, both merely realize Lord Henry's cynical dictum that in - narcissistic - love one begins by deceiving others and ends by deceiving oneself. Like Basil Hallward - the narcissistic rage of Dorian kills both Sybil and Basil - the charm of her life lies in her art: and when she fails Dorian in this, he is no longer interested in her. It is significant that Dorian first realizes the secret of the painting - a portrait of the young man as an artist in life - after parting with Sybil. His unconvincing remorse at her death barely hides the fact that the search for perfection, begun in Basil's studio, ends with Dorian giving his perfection to himself, for he has been removed from the flux of time. He is now, like the Tanagra statuette (also in Basil's studio) iconostatic, a work of art; a twisted version of Pater's spectator of all time and existence.⁴

As a study of narcissistic personality, Dorian is a subtle characterization. The selfish narcissist - which is what Dorian becomes under Lord Henry's influence - feels that, living in perpetual possibility, he is in a state of confusion as to who he really is, and therefore what he really feels: "'Harry", cried Dorian Gray, coming over and sitting down beside him, "why is it that I cannot feel this tragedy as much as I want to? I don't think I am heartless. Do you?"' (p.100) At each encounter with another person, either Dorian is convinced he is not feeling enough or Wilde makes it clear that the growth of his emotional impulses towards others is indeed stunted. All through the book Dorian is haunted by his anxiety-ridden conscience, which accuses him not only of monstrous scarlet sins, but of not feeling enough. Beneath this self-accusation lies the conviction that the world is failing him; for however much the narcissistic self may doubt and question itself, its stability, like the outward beauty of Narcissus, is sacrosanct. Pain at self-division and feelings of inferiority are chronic, and may reach crisis proportions. Yet the final paradox of the book, one which is the inevitable consequence of Dorian's life, is that his death occurs during no psychotic climacteric, but on one of the many occasions when, like gloating upon the portrait,

he broods upon the bitter emptiness within; and he stabs the portrait not to kill consciously or injure himself, but to erase its function as recorder and conscience, in an attempt to create the conditions of absolute freedom.

In such a world as Dorian creates for himself, the supreme vice is shallowness - a word whose meaning here is, on the whole, entirely different from that in De Profundis. There, it described the state of the man 'who does not know himself'.⁵ Dorian and Lord Henry apply it to those who, in their opinion, lack either the intelligence to know or the conviction to admit that self-absorption in self-culture is the greatest good. It implies superiority in the possession of a subtle and fascinating temperament. But it also suggests the shallow two-dimensional image contained in a mirror or a portrait; and indeed, at the start of chapter eleven, Dorian, shallow in the - literally - De Profundis sense, confronts his portrait with mirror in hand: and such multiple reflections are echoed in society, where Dorian is taken up as 'the true realization of a type of which [young men] had often dreamed' (p.129) - diaphanous temperament, worshipper of beauty, graceful hero of his own not so imaginary portrait.

The strategies adopted by Dorian's narcissistic ego to evade break-down and psychosis account for much of the novel's imagery and technique. There are three means by which the selfish narcissist may avoid accepting the consequences of his actions - the past reconstructed, the self split and the escape into art. At one point Lord Henry declares, '"the one charm of the past is that it is past"'. Existing only in memory, the past is infinitely malleable, and the main instrument of reconstruction is nostalgia. Dorian, however, is unable to enter the realm of nostalgia. He makes little response to Lord Henry's (p.216), and the reasons for this are not too hard to find. Dorian does not need to remember what life was like when he was young because he is, and always was, young. This fact also affects the main psychological motive behind nostalgia - the attempt to take known and finished feelings, whatever they once were, as a definition of who a person is now. As we shall see, Dorian was always the same person in his own mind, as far back as he could remember. He may deconstruct and reconstruct the past at will, but because the future will be inevitable, the present is always what the past has been.

By making Dorian conscious of his beauty and its decay, Lord Henry succeeds in making him acutely self-conscious (p.57). He continues the process by advocating self-splitting as a means of

escape from what Dorian feels as the lacerations of conscience: "'to become the spectator of one's own life, as Harry says, is to escape the suffering of life'"(p.110). The self, in the procedure of viewing its self, stands outside of time and thereby succeeds in abrogating its existential responsibilities. Such a moment of Narcissus in nature reflecting Narcissus in nature nourishes the illusion of clairvoyance, because all details in the world are equally available or equally remote; and this creates the feeling of transcendental omnipotence, for the mind can then make of reality what it will. To be everything and nothing is to have limitless potential.

The split self is closely allied in this novel to the third strategy, the escape into art. Dorian cannot feel anything for Sibyl as a living person, nor can he accept the truth about his callous rejection of her. She is therefore transformed into part of the world of art. In this milieu - and it is significant that on the day he hears of Sybil's suicide he consents to go to the Opera with Lord Henry - powerful yet detached feelings are not only permissible, but welcome. Dorian's painful remorse and guilt is transmuted into an aesthetic experience even while he questions the legitimacy of this process:

'and yet I must admit that this thing that has happened does not affect me as it should. It seems to me to be simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek tragedy, a tragedy in which I took a great part, but by which I have not been wounded'. (p.100)

Lord Henry, wise in the paradoxes of the narcissistic ego, clarifies and rationalizes Dorian's solution for him: "'suddenly we find that we are no longer the actors, but the spectators of the play. Or rather we are both. We watch ourselves, and the mere wonder of the spectacle enthralls us'"(p.101). The analogy of actor and spectator is, as we shall see, a dominant metaphor for the return of the self's love to its own self.

Lord Henry lends his approval to Dorian's desire to turn life into art simply by his insistence upon it: "'to you at least she was always a dream, a phantom that flitted through Shakespeare's plays and left them lovelier for its presence.... The moment she touched actual life, she marred it, and it marred her'"(p.103).

Sibyl must always remain, like the Lady of Shalott, in a world of shadows and reflections of reality. The description of nature - consistently symbolic in the novel - following upon Lord Henry's speech serves to underline the echo of Tennyson's poem: 'the evening darkened in the room. Noiselessly, and with silver feet, the shadows crept in from the garden. The colours faded wearily out of things' (p.103). But where the mirror was a prison for the Lady, and the world of art similarly for Sibyl, to the narcissistic Dorian it promises liberation. 'This portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors' (p.106). It would stem the sense of immanent decay and Weltschmerz suggested by the above description of dusk. It can create for Dorian that desired world in which every action is a new beginning, where the past has no deleterious effect upon the everpresent, 'a world in which things would have fresh shapes and colours, and be changed, or have other secrets, a world in which the past would have little or no place, or survive, at any rate, in no conscious form of obligation or regret' (pp.131-2). The innocence and beauty of this world is described in a strangely wistful tone. It is the only extensive descriptive passage in the novel in which one is aware of a definite narratorial voice: Wilde, it might be said, betrays here his longing for such a world, and such a condition of renewed innocence. It is a condition that is a direct consequence of the model of selfhood examined in chapter one, where the self existed in pure potential of selfhood, ever becoming. This condition is all the more poignant when contrasted to descriptions of the natural world which occur in the book. Take, for instance, the several paragraphs at the start of the novel which describe Basil Hallward's garden. The style is characteristically mannerist, art referring to art; and the profusion of adjective-noun combinations add to the effect of heavy, intricate detail: 'the sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way through the long unmown grass, or circling with monotonous insistence round the dusty gilt horns of the straggling woodbine, seemed to make the stillness more oppressive. The dim roar of London was like the bourdon note of a distant organ' (p.1). London, urban reality, is transformed into an aspect of the world of art, and this treatment of the city in both its uglier and finer manifestations continues throughout the novel. The oppressive sterility of the novel's theme - the self, circling in a sterile world - is conveyed by the image of bees circling the 'dusty gilt horns' (again, nature made artificial), for bees, while attracted

by the strong scent of the honeysuckle plant, are unable to reach the flowers' nectar, which lies deep within the narrow trumpet blossom. The bees may 'shoulder' through the grass, but ultimately the very object of their quest frustrates them.⁶ The botanical analogy is continued when Lord Henry finds Dorian in the garden, 'burying his face in the great cool lilac-blossoms'(p.20). After listening to Lord Henry expatiate on the new Hedonism, Dorian drops a spray of lilac he has been carrying: 'a furry bee came and buzzed round it for a moment. Then it began to scramble all over the oval stellated globe of the tiny blossoms... He saw it creeping into the stained trumpet of a Tyrian convolvulus'(p.23). Both the lilac and the convolvulus are self-fertilizing flowers, and point up the androgynous self-love which is in the process of being awakened in Dorian by Lord Henry.⁷

Most of the novel is written in dialogues or internal monologue, which lends importance to natural description when it occurs. There is frequent inversion of natural and urban images - when Sibyl is with her brother in the park, parasols are described - in the manner of Whistler - as dancing and dipping like 'monstrous butterflies'; and after Basil's murder, leafless trees shake 'their black iron branches'(pp. 68, 159). The device lends itself easily to the main effect of the book's descriptive passages, which is that of a charged, tense atmosphere. The main forms of the verb in these passages are present participle and gerund, emphasizing the static, omnipresent reality of things and their tyranny over the senses. 'In the slanting beams that streamed through the open doorway the dust danced and was golden. The heavy scent of the roses seemed to brood over everything'(p.24). It is this almost hysterical sense of oppression and closure that Dorian seeks to evade by the ceaseless creation and re-creation of the world around him.

There must be no limit upon anything, for to limit is to admit failure. The Duchess of Monmouth asks Lord Henry outright, '"what are you?"', and he replies '"to define is to limit"', in spite of the fact that he is consciously defining his attitudes in almost every remark he makes (p.196). But Dorian comes to tire of even this re-creational process, and returns to reality, confining nature as he sees it, full of bitterness and recrimination: 'ugliness that had once been hateful to him because it made things real, became dear to him now for that very reason. Ugliness was the one reality'(p.186). He finds temporary relief for these destructive feelings

of self-hate in the prostitutes and opium-dens of Blue Gate Fields, and manages to convince himself that he is freed by indulging in them - 'they were what he needed for forgetfulness. In three days he would be free' (p.186). But this recourse to a more real form of reality only intensifies the need for more reality and more escape. These two polarities swing further and further apart; the flight from one to the other becomes more desperate. Dorian is no longer seeking experience, but Experience. Yet though the centre cannot hold, things do not fall apart. The immensely powerful self-preserving instincts direct Dorian's actions to the very last, in spite of his appalling consciousness of what the future holds in store for him, and which he intuitively even at the start of his career - 'the past could always be annihilated. Regret, denial, or forgetfulness could do that. But the future was inevitable' (p.119). Dorian is wrong about the past - he attempts to wipe it out by destroying the portrait - but right about the future. The narcissist nearly always remains a narcissist.

Ultimately, Dorian Gray can never be free. 'It is said that passion makes one think in a circle' (p.186). The form of the book and Dorian's life is circular. The marvellous portrait returns to its unblemished condition at the end of the novel. The subject of Lord Henry's last remark to Dorian is lilacs, those self-pollinating flowers so prominent in Basil's garden at the start of the book. It is this fundamental movement which differentiates the novel from other doppelgänger studies, such as Conrad's 'The Secret Sharer'. Dorian unwittingly ends his life where his narcissism unwittingly began, in the bare, lonely schoolroom and nursery, among symbols of innocence - 'the stainless purity of his boyish life' (p.122) - that most elusive of human qualities. His last action is no heroic act, nor even an apocalyptic ending - merely one more on the endless narcissistic circuit. Dorian is not a character like Isobel Archer or Emma Woodhouse, both of whom make mistakes about others because of flaws in themselves, who suffer and are more or less cured. There is no progress towards self-knowledge: Dorian dies, as he lived, in confusion.

That Wilde was indeed concerned to portray the paradoxes and circularities of a narcissistic selfhood can be illustrated with close reference to the changes he made to the first, Lippincott version of the novel. The main effect of Wilde's careful revisions

is to expand the dramatic incident of the novel by creating, for example, the James Vane sub-plot. But these revisions also fill out the portrait of a narcissistic self growing in narcissism. In the revised version, for example, we are shown Lord Henry's influence developing over Dorian, where in the first it is merely stated.⁸ We thus see in more detail how Lord Henry's ideal of self-absorption and individualism - so prominent, as we saw, in Wilde's criticism - may lead to solipsism and selfishness: how a model of dynamic, ceaseless change can easily accommodate a model of narcissism. There are many other examples of the narcissistic theme being amplified in the later version. The passage describing how Dorian destroys the 'curiously carved mirror' with its love emblems, given him by Lord Henry (p.220), is absent in Lippincott; as is the description of Dorian earlier in the novel as Antinous and Narcissus (p.114). Lord Henry's investigations into Dorian's background, also chronicled in the added chapter, provide a suitable genealogy for the potential narcissist. The insertion of the two chapters set in Dorian's country house raises the reader's expectations that Dorian might change his life for the better by providing a good psychological motive - relief at escaping death - for his good intentions in the next chapter. Dorian's disappointment at the end of the novel is all the more savage because his disappointment has become greater in its context in the revised version.

There are many stylistic changes in the revised version, the great majority of these being additions to the text. The following passages are typical examples of the changes -

'My dear Dorian, the only way a woman can ever reform a man is by boring him so completely that he loses all possible interest in life'. (p.47, Lippincott)

'My dear Dorian', answered Lord Henry, taking a cigarette from his case, and producing a gold-latten matchbox, 'the only way a woman can ever reform a man is by boring him so completely that he loses all possible interest in life'. (p.99).

The lad flushed up, and, going to the window, looked out on the green, flickering garden for a few moments. (p.53, Lippincott)

The lad flushed up, and, going to the window, looked out for a few moments on the green, flickering, sun-lashed garden'.⁹ (p.108)

The main effect of these stylistic changes is to add to the weight

of epigrammatic utterance and descriptive detail in the novel. The style appears, in the revised version, to be all the more intricate, elaborate and mannered, despite the active, dramatic additions - such as the Vane sub-plot - to the novel.

The mannerist convolutions of Wilde's style, in fact, point to a disturbing stylistic trait in the novel that can be traced to the principal subject of the novel - the portrayal of a model of narcissistic selfhood. I have said above that the style is mannerist; but this term requires definition, for in the extent to which Wilde's prose is mannerist lies in the novel's major flaw. Mannerist art - and especially the historically Mannerist production of sixteenth century Italy - exhibits an appetite for the spectacular and fantasy, self-conscious stylization and refinement of style, often the preciousness of style for its own sake, and sometimes a style of excess. In literature, more often than not, it appears as a virtuoso performance - Renaissance Bembismo or Euphuism. All this is present in Wilde's novel. The book is laden with objets d'art that appear indiscriminately and therefore exist merely because they are beautiful description - 'after about ten minutes he got up, and, throwing on an elaborate dressing-gown of silk-embroidered cashmere wool, passed into the onyx-paved bath-room' (p.93). There is no contextual reason here why Dorian's dressing-gown and bathroom should be so described, for we well know by now that he is rich and enjoys beautiful things, and the descriptions serve no other purpose than to tell us this. (In Lippincott the description is simpler, with the words 'of silk-embroidered cashmere wool' being absent - p.44). Furthermore, the lavish description of the dressing-gown, together with the too casual verb 'throwing on' (which acts as a foil to the rich description) outshines the already weak verb, 'passed'. What we gain from the sentence, then, is the static luxury of objects, not a description of movement from one room to another.

This lack of movement pervades the entire book, accompanied by an obsession with the beauty of art objects -

When he had stretched himself on the sofa, he looked at the title-page of the book. It was Gautier's 'Émaux et Camées', Charpentier's Japanese-paper edition, with a Jacquemart etching. The binding was of citron-green leather, with a design of gilt trellis-work and dotted pomegranates... As he turned over the pages his eye fell on the poem about the hand of Lacenaire. (pp.163-4)

The book is a gift; but again, there is no narrative reason for its close description as a rare physical object. Its richness and uniqueness obscure its literary function in the novel, and its extended description replaces movement: Dorian 'stretched himself' on the sofa - a verb redolent of languid fatigue, and certainly odd in a context of tense anxiety. Pages are merely 'turned over', not turned purposefully. Movement, again, is minimal; and static descriptions of things dominate the foreground of the novel. The same is true on a larger narrative plane. Dorian Gray is arranged in static tableaux, with little direct narrative movement bridging the scenes, and virtually no off-stage movement of plot. The portrait, for instance, despite Wilde's attempts to convey Dorian's constant, fearful care of it, is only a presence in the novel on the occasions when Dorian is gloating on it. The narrative moves in brittle scenes, lacking continuity across its isolated parts. Chapter eleven typically describes Dorian's life not in terms of fluent motivation and action, but of his whimsies for rich, rare objects - whimsies that are richly described, never analysed.

It might be argued, though, that in so emphasizing variety of objects over movement, particularly narrative energy, Wilde is merely stressing the parts rather than the whole. This is a desired quality in Mannerist art, finding its authority in the Homeric description of Achilles's shield, and to dismiss it is to dismiss much of sixteenth century Mannerist art as well as much art outside this period to which the term 'mannerist' may be fairly applied. It is no derogation of an art form to say that it expresses the values of variety rather than unity - after all, there is always some sort of unity in an art work, and in those concerned with variety and isolation of parts, it is usually decorative unity, of refined execution, abandoning atmosphere for clarity of detail. But the decorative variety of Wilde's novel is too decorative, and finds its expression not in energetic contrast of detail, but in mere multiplicity. Variety itself becomes the style of the book and does not control a rich and effective harmony of details, but ends by defeating itself. Satiety is the obvious danger, but more invidious is the perverse inclination for variety as style to make description read and sound alike, in accumulation. It leads to monotony.

The novel is floridly monotonous because its diversity actually ignores the real expressive problems inherent in describing the narcissistic self. As we have seen, such a selfhood desires endless variety above all, but remains strangely static. This is particularly true of Dorian's hypostatized existence. To describe such a self in terms of diversity and verbal opulence is to mirror the narcissistic self, for variety is then an ornament of style, not a response to an expressive problem. This error of expression is clearly related to the endlessly dynamic structure of selfhood examined in chapter one; and in the novel it arises because Wilde did not fully understand the difficulties that describing and analyzing a narcissistic self inevitably pose. This blindness in turn arises from the fact that, however clearly Wilde portrays Dorian's life as wrong and doomed, he is still sympathetic to the aims of his project - a project, which like Wilde's model of selfhood dealt with in chapter one, stresses becoming above all else. Endless becoming is the cause of endless variety: both, paradoxically, end in stasis. The result is a perversion of Conrad's famous analogy of the kernel and the haze. The monotony of endlessly variegated detail cannot reproduce the haze: it does not irradiate the tale, but merely obscures it.

In such circumstances, style becomes a sacrosanct quality. Wilde could jest about a hard day's work - "'this morning I took out a comma, and this afternoon - I put it in again'" - but such a quest for style is ultimately self-defeating.¹⁰ It is a vicious circle, a circular prison akin to that of De Profundis. In The Picture of Dorian Gray Wilde created an uncanny portrait of a narcissistic type. He did so from an ambiguous position, aware of its attractions, but not enough aware of its expressive problems to free his writing from its narcotic effects. The book's weaknesses arise from Wilde's inability to understand the full implications of his model of selfhood. This inability left his novel sadly flawed.

ii. Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa: The Static Self

When Heinemann published the final canon of Moore's works, two of his novels, Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa, were absent. First

published in 1898 and 1900 respectively, their subsequent revisions bear witness to Moore's constant dissatisfaction with them. No other works gave him equal cause for such annoyance: in the Preface to the final version of Evelyn Innes he admits to 'exasperated regret that the soul of Evelyn Innes had eluded [him] so completely'; and this was to be his last word, too, on the subject.¹¹ His words point, however, to the heart of the two books: above all, they are novels of temperament, the temperament belonging to the major character in particular. What this temperament consists of will be defined first of all; and then the effects and causes of Moore's inability to embody it in his novels will be analyzed.

Evelyn Innes is a Wagnerian soprano who comes to live out her art in her life. She exhibits many of the classical narcissistic personality traits - eagerness for praise and the overwhelming desire to be loved; dread of disapproval; unsatisfactory relationships with people and things in the outside world combined with doubts about inner feeling; extreme self-consciousness leading to a split personality; sexuality become a fantasy state of being.¹² The attitude she holds towards her art is one that determines all others in her life: 'her acting was so much a part of herself that she could not think of it as an art at all; it was merely a medium through which she was able to re-live past phases of her life, or to exhibit her present life in a more intense and concentrated form' (p.160).

The statement is typical of late nineteenth century theories of acting and stands in opposition to that of Diderot who, in one of the earliest treatises on acting asked, 'if the actor were full, really full, of feeling, how could he play the same part twice running with the same spirit and success? Full of fire at the first performance, he would be worn out and cold as marble at the third'.¹³ Evelyn does not rely totally on feeling: after all, her affair with Ulick Dean begins when they both study the score of Tristan und Isolde (the choice of opera is symbolic) to discover how Isolde must be acted. Her understanding of roles, however, is essentially emotive and self-centred. Her best parts are those of penitential women, which, in the abasement of the self, may be seen by the subject as a position of strength (there are those who go to the bottom of the table in order to be raised to the top). Thus, when she is Owen Asher's mistress

her Wagnerian Elizabeth 'was a side of her life that now only existed on the stage'(p.162). It is significant that she cannot understand the role of Elsa. Unlike Tannhauser or Tristan und Isolde where action and character are determined by plausible motives and emotions, Lohengrin has at its centre a mystery: 'this knight who wanted to marry her, and who would not tell his name. What did it mean? And the celebrated duet in the nuptial chamber - what did it mean?'(p.162). The fact that she cannot understand a role that she has not come into direct contact with in life is indicative not only of her own emotive theory of performance, but of contemporary theories of acting in general, and in particular of the theory that Arthur Symonds, one of the novel's dedicatees, presented in reference to the Italian star actress, Eleonora Duse.

Evelyn aligns herself with Duse's technique of acting, whereby the illusion of strong personality is achieved through impersonal acting - she plays parts with little rhetoric of voice or gesture.¹⁴ However, what stops her using her personality to achieve impersonality is insurmountable narcissism; and because of this, she feels that she cannot sing roles which she cannot identify with her own experience. The reverse is also true in the novel. Following the direction of the spectator in life, and fulfilling Wilde's paradox that nature imitates art, Evelyn's personality is gradually changed by her acting, and her potential narcissism is stimulated by her stage roles.

Thus the reconciliation with her father, a deeply emotional moment, is transformed into a comical scene because Evelyn's narcissism effaces all blame for past offences by role-playing. Responsibility for past actions is thus denied, for the narcissistic self refuses to accept this constraint: 'the wonder of the scene she was acting - she never admitted she acted; she lived through scenes, whether fictitious or real - quickened in her; it was the long-expected scene, the scene in the third act of the "Valkyrie"'. The discharge of emotion causes her to experience a vicarious absolution: 'she was conscious of the purification of self... She experienced a great happiness in becoming humble and simple again'. As art and life merge, Evelyn loses what shaky hold she had upon the real truth of the reconciliation: 'she knelt at her father's or at Wotan's feet - she could not distinguish; all limitations had been razed. She was the daughter at the father's feet. She knelt like the Magdalen'

(pp.209-10). She is indeed the penitent whore and innocent girl, Magdalen and Virgin, nerveuse and femme fatale. And all the time she is not merely savouring this experience: like Dorian, she is savouring Experience. The scene becomes grotesquely comic when, absorbed in her own solipsistic grief and regret, she begins to sing Wagner.

Evelyn's inclination to view life as art is also exemplified by the two pictures in the Dulwich gallery that represent her choice of life-style prior to eloping with Sir Owen Asher (Evelyn cannot see either the past or the future in terms of historical flux: she retains merely static arrangements of experience); and by the picture of her dead mother. Evelyn clearly identifies with her mother and since she regards her as an ideal, her relation to her is an ambivalent one, incorporating love, rivalry and awe -

in some strange way her mother had always seemed more real than her father. Her father lived on the surface of things, in this life, whereas her mother seemed independent of time and circumstance, a sort of principle, an eternal essence, a spirit which she could often hear speaking to her far down in her heart. (p.252)

Her mother is more real to Evelyn because she is able to absorb totally into her own self the picture of her. She is pure memory and thus pure invention; and there is no connecting present or future which may destroy the image Evelyn creates from the portrait. This image is one of intact narcissism, the iconostatic completeness of the person removed from the existential responsibilities and sufferings that time imposes upon the existing self.

There are many other images, actions and descriptions that cluster round Evelyn in the novel and define her selfhood as narcissistic. One strong image of narcissism occurs at the start of chapter twenty. Her mood is one of 'desolate self-consciousness', in which she 'sat absorbed, viewing the world from afar, like the Lady of Shalott, seeing in the mirror of memory the chestnut trees of the Dulwich street, and a little girl running after her hoop' (p.266). The comparison is revealing: but while the Lady of Shalott's mirror reflected the present, Evelyn's mirror provides a reflection of the present from the mirror of the past. Evelyn is obsessed with the past and the future, and seeks in time past and to come for idealizations of herself, as she looks for the same in every man with whom she becomes involved. Thus - 'Oh,

the intense hours of anticipation! and the wonderful recollections! rich and red as the heart of a flower!' (p.369) It is significant that this passage occurs during a long self-analysis after Evelyn has left Owen. She is trying to fill the emptiness she feels by cherishing fond memories; but in doing so she inevitably distorts the true meaning that time past and future holds for her: 'Dulwich was too familiar; it was like living in a room where there was nothing but mirrors. Dulwich was one vast mirror of her past life. In Dulwich she was never living in the present. She could not see Dulwich, she could only remember it' (pp.334-5).

It should be clear by now that the selfhood which Moore felt was always eluding him was a narcissistic selfhood; and to his self-confessed failure in this he attributed the failure of the double-decker novel as a whole. In order to appreciate this, we must examine how the character of Evelyn is embodied in the text. At one point in the novel - in a scene within a scene - Evelyn remembers a strange incident in Venice:

she had not seen Owen for two months, and was expecting him every hour. The old walks of the palace, the black and watchful pictures, the watery odours and echoes from the canal had frightened and exhausted her... There was only one lamp. She had watched it, fearing every moment lest it should go out... She had cast a frightened glance round the room, and it was the spectre of life that her exalted imagination saw, and her natural eyes a strange ascension of the moon. (p.156)

The feeling of anxiety grows worse - 'the houses leaned heavily forward and Evelyn feared she might go mad, and it was through this phantom world of lagoon and autumn mist that a gondola glided'. Here, the narrative seems to point to a condition of mind in which Evelyn loses the capacity to resist the world's strangeness, its threatening otherness, with a particular history and personality. One assumes that Evelyn's identity in the world is being overwhelmed because she is living at this moment entirely in the future, waiting. This memory ought to be exactly the opposite of the Dulwich incident, with the same result. But to say this of the Venice memory is to overload the narrative at this point with a significance it simply does not possess. This lack of significance in the incident, the natural feeling on the reader's part that there ought to be more in it, indicates the flawed nature of the novel as a whole.

One might illustrate this by comparing the above incident in Venice to one in A la recherche du temps perdu where Marcel, left alone by his mother in Venice, feels not merely her absence, but is acutely aware of his own absence. Venice becomes alien and frighteningly indifferent - 'the palaces reduced to their constituent parts, lifeless heaps of marble with nothing to choose between them, and the water as a combination of hydrogen and oxygen, eternal, blind, anterior and exterior to Venice'¹⁵ - and identifying the world becomes impossible when self-identification in the world is impossible.

In Moore's narrative there is no attempt to analyse Evelyn's condition of selfhood. We are predominantly given the impression by the narrative voice that Evelyn is being described from the outside. We are not with her in her moments of dread and near despair: we are with the narrator who is describing the scene and person for us. But the narrator has no presence in the novel. He is, for the most part, entirely translucent and invisible - unlike the omniscient narrator in Tess, for example, whose presence as observer-narrator is felt by the reader of the novel. In Evelyn Innes we are more aware of being told a story than of the story itself; and because this happens for no other reason than that it does happen, the narrative voice becomes self-referential and appears narcissistic.

It is true that Proust avoided distracting the reader in this way by actually making the narrative voice the centre of his novel. Nevertheless, there are other, more important devices he uses. We come across passages of psychological analysis conveyed by metaphor, syntactical inversion, the accumulation of images around certain objects, and the reduction of character and dramatic incident to Marcel's imagination. Thus in the Venice passage quoted above, the disintegration of Venice takes place because of Marcel's dread - recognizing Venice depends for Marcel on his projecting his self onto the city. The metaphor of Venice then becomes for the reader almost epistemological: Marcel's failure of recognition and imagination is properly defined by Proust as a kind of ontological crisis, a sudden deprivation of selfhood. Nothing of this sort happens to Evelyn, principally because the sinister gloom of Venice is not a metaphor of her condition, nor is it so projected by her. Narcissistic Evelyn is set in gloomy Venice - that is all. We look in vain for deeper significance in the episode. The bland generalizations defeat us: the 'spectre of life' is a mere stage-

prop, as is the 'strange ascension of the moon' and solitary lamp. They only distract us from Evelyn's condition, and serve to emphasize our sense of being told about Evelyn - even though here, it is she who is remembering.

Incident after incident in the book reveals the same lack of narrative significance. As a result, the book's variety of incident and the kaleidoscopic variety of moods Evelyn goes through turn against themselves and are merely tedious to read. As a corollary to this paradoxical variety, Evelyn's narcissism is established much too early in her affair with the self-absorbed and effete Owen Asher. Consequently we see fairly early in the novel the main traits in the relationship - the selfish desire for admiration on the part of each lover, for instance. Narrative suspense is thus lost in the relationship; as it is also lost when early in the novel we encounter the opposition in Evelyn's life between religion and worldly pursuits. As Evelyn's narcissistic character remains static in the midst of variety, so the affair hardly progresses from its beginning to its end; and the reader is presented with a static relation between static characters that strives to move on, but cannot. Evelyn's dreamy indecision is portrayed by a narrative that is itself indecisive, because it seems to be going nowhere. The cause of the novel's hypostatization lies in Moore's inadequate embodiment of narcissism in a narrative that colludes with the narcissistic Evelyn and does not analyze her condition. On the contrary, the translucent narrative embodies neither overt judgment nor irony, and tells us, blandly and naively, of the character's narcissism: 'Evelyn sat thinking... her eyes fixed on the distant garden, seeing life from afar, strange and distant, like reflections in still waters' (p.475). The image of her recalls that of the Lady of Shalott at the start of chapter twenty, and is one of the many reiterations throughout the novel of the narcissist's restless dissatisfaction with the world as it is.

But this description of Evelyn, so characteristic of her and the narrative in the novel, holds further significance. It is notable that we do not see Evelyn here or at any point in the novel, within a social setting and taking an active role in social gatherings. The narrative seems to shield her from the intrusions of the world. She is curiously apart from the world, and her most profound moments in the narrative are never in her relations with others, but occur as self-revelations during introspection. Speaking in another context, Hannah

Arendt has analyzed the effects of such introspection; and her words describe the strangely oppressive, self-referential quality of Moore's narrative, and the damaging inversions it unwittingly creates for itself -

introspection accomplishes two feats: it annihilates the actually existing situation by dissolving it in mood, and at the same time it lends everything subjective an aura of objectivity, publicity, extreme interest. In introspection the boundaries between what is intimate and what is public become blurred; intimacies are made public, and public matters can be experienced and expressed only in the realm of the intimate - ultimately, in gossip.¹⁶

Strange though it may seem in a novel whose main character is a singer and actress, introspection is the dominant mood of the novel. Evelyn appears to have no public life, for her private life constantly intrudes upon it. The effect on the narrative is curiously oppressive, for Evelyn's private life is taken up with feeding her narcissistic hunger. The hunger is appeased by confession, for example. Evelyn yearns to confess to most of the characters in the novel: 'she felt that she must confess her sins even if she did not believe in confession' (p.392). The narcissistic urge to gossip about the self, to turn the public realm into the private, solipsistic realm, is irresistible for Evelyn. Like its concomitant tendency to act in the scene with her father, it turns into comedy what should have been a moving incident, her reconciliation to the Church. She confesses kneeling upon a hard cocoa-nut mat: 'but when her confession turned from her sins against faith to her sins of the flesh, she forgot the pain of her knees' (p.397). Regarding doctrine 'as a musician regards crotchets and quavers, as a means of expression' (p.394), Evelyn accepts it in order to complete the ritual. But her real absolution, that 'extraordinary relief' which she later cannot account for, she obtains not through any divine forgiveness but through the superficial pain and the intense secret pleasure of autobiographical martyrdom (p.403).

The irony of this scene, however, is still clumsy. The incident is an ideal occasion to examine the many cruel ironies that attend the world's unconscious compulsion of women into narcissistic positions. Such ironies were exposed by Henry James in his portrait of Isobel Archer; but Moore barely touches on them. His too easily descriptive narrative misses the general points of Evelyn's condition,

with its anti-social impulses; and no self-awareness occurs on Evelyn's part because the narrative lacks the subtlety to indicate this rather than tell it outright. Having told it outright, of course, Evelyn's via dolorosa would come to an end, and the novel would be fulfilled. Any incident could foreclose the novel, in fact, and the cumulative effect of the narrative points to an ending where Evelyn comes to a realization of her own condition. But because any incident would do, no incident in the narrative could do; and the narrative becomes tedious. Centred upon Evelyn's narcissistic selfhood as it is, the narrative can find no sufficient reason to end the story; for really, as Arendt's words reveal, the novel is a study in mood, no more. Moore's handling of the subject, narcissism, cannot support the length, or the concentrated focus, of the narrative. The variety of incident becomes, literally, a monotony of incident. At the end of the novel Evelyn is as undecided and as unsure of the nature of her self and her desires as she has always been. Her last état d'âme is significant of the narrative's failure to adequately embody its subject.

Wagner and Wagnerism is a central concern in Evelyn Innes, and as literary historians have pointed out, Moore's Wagnerism is clearly linked to his attempt to provide the novel with an experimental structure of thematic contrast and restatement, such as Edouard Dujardin had initiated in Les lauriers sont coupés. As we have seen, contrast is denied by the quality of the narrative, which merely restates the isolated psychological condition of narcissism. In Sister Teresa, however, there is a significant change to the setting of the novel. Evelyn enters the convent as a nun and takes her place in a small community. There is now a source of tension in the novel, between her narcissism and the selfless adoration of God that fills the lives of the nuns. Almost by accident, Sister Teresa has the potential to be a better novel than Evelyn Innes, because Evelyn's narcissism - the real centre of the double novel - is threatened by her social environment, and the narrative must chronicle this tension. It does so as before, however, still blandly telling of it, still a failed type of third person interior monologue, with all the attendant faults of its predecessor.

When Evelyn enters the convent, permanently, as a novice, she still refuses to make her decision a deliberate choice. She allows herself to be decided by the fact that she can, by singing, reduce the burden of debt through which the convent is threatened with closure. Her decision is not an existential choice of life, an either/or - although she recognizes the necessity for this choice - but may in future

be attributed by her to charitable motives. She thus makes no real commitment to her life as Sister Teresa. She sees the convent as a place where she will be free from the dread and anxious ennui of social life, and seeks release from the purposelessness of her existence in the static life of conventual obedience, poverty and chastity. The Prioress of the Passionist Sisters, however, sees through Evelyn's self-deceptions - "'you know [our life] only from the outside, you are still an actress, you are acting on a different stage, that is all'" (p.104). Evelyn agrees with this judgment on her, and even quotes instances, but still does not realize how damaging is this false objectivity of the actress watching her own performance. One assumes she does not yet understand what it is to be an existing subject in time; and therefore the self's relationship towards its self and the world remains a narcissistic one. The narrative, however, is silent on this crucial point - it is not ambiguous but indecisive about its own embodiment of Evelyn's narcissism.

If Sister Teresa is not to be a mere shadow of Evelyn Innes then Sister Teresa must be shown to be in some way different from Evelyn. This does happen in the second novel, despite the identical narrative technique, when Evelyn begins to investigate the past that she has entered the convent to forget, and come to a true understanding of its meaning for her. This begins at chapter twenty-one, where Evelyn no longer thinks of herself as existing in a timeless everpresent, but begins to see it in process. This is in contrast to her original escapist reasons for entering the convent, and her state of mind at the start of the book - 'in the landscape and in her there seemed no before and no hereafter' (p.1). Her thoughts in her meditation have shifted from particular traumatic events to the whole complex of historical experience which gives an event its traumatic impact; from trauma to resistance; from the gnoseological to the volitional. Her thought is now directed not towards blind acceptance of her self, but towards comprehending it - attempting to undo the resistances that she may comprehend what she knows, may remember what she wills forgotten. This therapy involves suffering, in confronting anxiety, in re-educating her self: "'Does another quest lie before me?" She tried to stifle the thought, but it cried across her life, like a curlew across waste lands' (p.192). Time is now no longer a grid upon which to measure events, but an element in which Sister Teresa

is deeply implicated - 'her [day] dreams were invaded by memories. Now that the convent had become a habit, the past drew nearer. The past had come to watch for her at the hour of meditations' (p.183). Time is now perceived as an element in which one must live as a subject in order to give meaning to life. Evelyn breaks off her meditation on her past,

abashed at finding so much design in her life - all incoherences vanished. She thought of a fish swimming in front of a net. At first the net is so far away that the fish does not perceive it, then gradually the meshes drift nearer, and the fish perceives that it narrows to a thin neck from which there is no escape... Her life seemed to have been ordained from the beginning; she seemed to have been created for a special purpose. (p.186)

It is a neat image, but its tone is wrong. Because we are told that the image of the swimming fish is thought by Evelyn, the previous comment - 'all incoherences vanished' - appears to be a firm authorial statement, and a clumsy explication of the following image. The image then becomes too abstract and distant from Evelyn's character; and as a result we pay attention to the image as image rather than its aptness to Evelyn's condition. The narrative remains self-referential.

When her singing finally accomplishes the task of eradicating the convent's debts, Evelyn's life is left purposeless, and she drifts into a long-dreaded crisis of identity. Her dread worsens, and she lives in a state of acute and chronic anxiety:

every day discovered new misgivings, finer subtleties, and despair settled gradually down on her. She lost control over her nerves, and all the old symptoms manifested themselves... sleepless nights and excessive consciousness of external things. She could see her life from end to end, distinct like an insect under a glass, and at night she noted the quiver of the antennae. (p.212)

It is not difficult to see her why the narrative gives us little sense of mental hysteria or break-down. In the passage from A la recherche referred to above, Marcel analyses his condition in terms of specific buildings crumbling and a disembodied attention paid to an incidental song that he is hearing. It is a vivid passage, in which imagination swamps identity, and Marcel's attention is given indifferently to the world, with just the right hint of abstracted obsession. Moore, however, loses tension by telling openly, and by dealing in abstract generalizations and cliches - 'excessive consciousness of external things', 'lost control'. The analogy of her life to an insect under a

glass, while it conveys the sense of close scrutiny, hardly conveys to the reader the actual sense of Evelyn's life as she examines it. Her break-down is not handled adequately in the narrative because Moore describes its various stages as a mere list of events that lose their ability to describe Evelyn because they are too distant from her actual feelings. His attempt to create Evelyn from the inside, by a type of neutral interior monologue fails to create Evelyn's responses to her dilemma as realistic or symbolic. The cause of this is a narcissistic selfhood which is poorly represented in the text.

If Sister Teresa is not to be a literally endless variety of incident and mood it requires a significant end. The only significant end could be Evelyn's release from narcissism. This occurs not in break-down, but in a later mystical experience in the convent garden. She experiences an inexplicable joy that ripples outwards to all things.

The great secret was revealed; she understood the mysterious yearning which impels us in turn to reject and to accept life; and she had learnt these things merely by watching the flowers raising their leaves to the light...And in another moment of revelation she knew that to seek the Real Presence on the altar alone is a denial of the Divine Being elsewhere, and she felt the door would be closed to her until in every mood and in every place she could recognize the sacrament as an eternal act in nature. (p.233)

It is clear that the narrative wants us to be aware that Evelyn's love is no longer returned exclusively to her own self in fear and dread of the world and its exchanges, but is given out, in a type of pantheism, to all things around her. Evelyn wills this without resistance and, in doing, breaks the narcissistic circle. It is significant, though, that the narrative embodies her release from narcissism as a mystical experience. Given the form of narrative with all the limitations pointed out above, it could not occur within Evelyn's natural selfhood. The narrative simply could not deal with it in terms of ordinary experience because it can only relate the event of an experience, hardly ever the causes behind the event. It would be too much, after a lifetime of narcissism, to represent a sudden reversal at the end of the novel; and so Moore's narrative moves to a conveniently transcendental plane. It is a gesture in the right direction but, as always, the narrative is not radical enough in its embodiment of Evelyn's experience. The end of her narcissistic quest is imposed on her, and does not grow naturally out of her development because she hardly develops throughout both novels.

In his three subsequent redactions of Evelyn Innes, Moore aimed merely at minor correction of the novel; but in the final revisions of both novels almost ten years after first publication, he attempted a radical alteration of the narrative. These have been compared in detail elsewhere;¹⁷ but not in relation to the theme of narcissistic selfhood in the novels.

There are many small changes in the final revisions that show Moore maturing in craftsmanship. Musical allusion is now subordinate to the dramatic issue in hand; the abrupt is heightened; absurd and irrelevant description removed; transitions between paragraphs are improved; natural dialogue relieves long description; and there are fewer, and more dramatic, indirect summaries of conversation.

These changes all make the narrative less static; but the major change in the narrative occurs when explicit exposition of inner feelings and circumstances becomes implicit illumination cast by characters's reactions to events. This shift in point of view at first appears to create an entirely new selfhood for Evelyn in Evelyn Innes. At the opening of chapter five, for example, she is ~~no~~ longer sitting over a cup of coffee, passively reflecting on her afternoon with Owen. We see her enter, throw her hat aside, and fall into a wicker chair. She is now much more active, analytic in her memories, alert in the narrative's new dramatic situations, and much less dreamily narcissistic. Her life up to the present is told by the narrative not directly, but indirectly, and more dramatically, in her conversation with Owen. In the first edition, only ten of the last thirty lines of this chapter had been given to the dramatic essence of their relationship. In the final version, all of them describe Evelyn's inner conflict, while the exaggerated sentiments and unhelpful literary allusions - which lent the scene a spurious artificiality - are excised.

All this would appear to indicate that Evelyn is no longer self-absorbed; that her structure of selfhood, as this is represented in the text, is no longer narcissistic. Where the Evelyn of the first edition is dreamily self-absorbed, the final Evelyn is poised and determined (an entire new chapter - ten - explores her firm decision to join Owen, so unlike the vacillation of the first edition). Having made a decision, she accepts the consequences coolly and calmly, and takes responsibility for her actions. Gradually, however, it becomes apparent that Moore is creating a subtler portrait of awakening narcissism,

and in the process lending tension to the narrative. The conflict between religious principle and passion, for instance, is played down in the first half of the novel, so that we can sense the growth of Evelyn's narcissism - a condition that leads her, paradoxically, to embrace both religion and passion, hedonism and asceticism. This provides the end of the novel with a climax that we can sense is plotted logically throughout the novel. Owen becomes aware of her growing coldness in Sister Teresa - 'for the first time it seemed to him that she was incapable of love - in other words, of giving herself wholly to anybody'.¹⁸

The development of Evelyn in narcissism is a radical improvement, for the narrative now focusses upon Evelyn's interior struggle. The following passages may be compared as an example of this:

the sight of Owen sitting amid all these attempts to capture happiness, revealed to her the moral idea of which this man was but a symbol; and the thought that life without a moral purpose is but a passing spectre, and that our immortality lies in our religious life, occurred to her again.

(Evelyn Innes, p.280)

a new outlook on life seemed to have been revealed suddenly, and she would have liked to ponder on it, only Owen was talking to her about his gout.¹⁹

The sonorous but irrelevant Yeatsian cadences, redundant images, vague abstractions - all these have been replaced by telling irony, a complex mixture of intimacy and distance in the narrative voice that undermines both characters' intimate assumptions about each other.

Yet in spite of such radical change, the novels still remain flawed. Owen Asher remains childishly narcissistic, becoming infantile and petulant in Sister Teresa, where, unfortunately, he figures much more in the novel's last revision than he had done in previous editions. He is too shallow a character to present Evelyn with either foil or double. Evelyn's emergence from the convent at the end of the revised Sister Teresa is a serious error, for there is not enough space to begin anew developing a structure of selfhood for her that is not narcissistic. The narrative, for all its improvement, still deals uneasily - particularly in the revision of Sister Teresa - with

the structure of narcissistic selfhood that belongs to Evelyn. This peculiar form of selfhood requires careful consideration, on the author's part, of the literary devices being used to embody it if the narrative is to succeed. In the three years that Moore spent writing the material for the two novels he was perhaps too absorbed with his experimental style to consider how it fitted his subject. As he came to realize himself, no amount of revision would alter the fundamental vacillation of incident and character caused by his chosen structure of selfhood. In Arendt's words, the novels become novels of mood; and this is insufficient to hold a reader's attention. To sustain interest in the novel's subject Moore would have had to create an entirely new narrative style to embody the narcissistic selfhood of Evelyn. He achieved such a style, in his last novels; but by then he had lost interest in the re-workings of his apprenticeship.

iii. Spiritual Adventures: The Solipsistic Self

In Arthur Symons's experimental autobiographical confession, Spiritual Adventures, the narrator is the person who is confessing: 'I am afraid I must begin a good way back if I am to explain myself to myself at all satisfactorily'.²⁰ Contrary to what it may seem at first reading, the book is a carefully arranged text, beginning with a short quasi-autobiographical account of Symons's life up to the point where he arrived in London as an aspiring young author. The following seven imaginary portraits are what one might consider as various aspects of his life, both before and after this point, and up to the time of his break-down while he was abroad in Italy. In an article on Eleanora Duse, Symons compared her early life with his own, and what he says of her confessions, The Flame of Life, could be applied to his own: it is 'l'inédit of life which one conceives to be one's main concern, the real "Inner history" of the soul and the body, of the sensations and of the emotions, of an inner life'.²¹ The eight portraits are reflections of what Symons conceives to be his 'real "Inner history"' - not a strictly linear Bildungsroman such as The Mill on the Floss or Mill's Autobiography, but a 'room full of mirrors', where the multiple reflections catch

different angles of the single subject, object and spectator of his self.

The original idea of the imaginary portrait derives of course from Pater, and for Symons its form presented opportunities that the prose poem, short story, novella denied. It was short enough for the reader to be aware of it as a self-conscious artistic unity, while its focus upon a type of selfhood allowed Symons to develop miniatures of various aspects of the self in which he was interested. Such a static arrangement, framed self-portraits upon the wall, clearly lends itself as a literary form to the description of narcissistic characters. Furthermore, it is a Symbolist aesthetic which underpins the form of the imaginary portraits of Spiritual Adventures; one which, in its assertion of the disinterested play of the imagination, points to the narcissistic potential in much of Symbolist literary practice. For if the symbol is indeed, as Charles Baudouin, writing of Verhaëren says, 'un paysage de rêve, obtenu par condensation de plusieurs paysages réels qui évoquent une émotion analogue',²² then the capacity for creating a literature absorbed in the narcissistic problems of pure potential is greatly increased. Now it was part of the Symbolist aesthetic to question the communicative efficiency of language, to re-employ it in the interests of wisdom and noumenal essence; and, finding it inadequate in abnormal circumstances, to discover a new 'language of spiritual utterance' (Yeats's phrase for Blake's poetry). This utterance would interpret to 'fallen and distract man the material witness of his natural senses', and would allow him to see 'that one thing is the sign and symbol of another'.²³ Such an aesthetic of correspondences gives rise to allegorical forms, where literary figures and tropes refer to an allos, an other which is otherwise ungraspable. The relationship between form and allos is all-important, and a distinction must be recognized here between scriptural or divine allegory, and secular allegory. Thus, when Jesus told his parables, the point of the form was not to disguise meaning or entertain, but to reveal otherwise ineffable, literally unspeakable truths of divine provenance. In secular allegory, the reason for the form is not to impart divine revelation, but to educate by skilful and/or entertaining disguise: abstract is thereby concretized. The Symbolist aesthetic aspires to the condition of authoritative revelation of the ineffable; but it does so without the metaphysical claims of divinely-inspired

writings; and without the vast tradition of Scripture and its concomitant texts to employ and re-deploy as its figures. Consequently, the distinctions between the figure and its referent, its allos, are erased and the two coalesce. Language becomes de-symbolized and de-metaphorized, returning, in a quasi-mystical fashion, to its literal meaning: 'The rose returning/Into the circle of its rounds'.²⁴

Symbolism, therefore, unlike the precise explication that may be applied to scriptural and medieval allegory, cannot afford to be explicit. It must somehow convey its meaning not by exact parallel, but by evoking an image in the reader, one which will be pre-cognitive, and which will convey its meaning by other than conscious processes. Mallarmé provides its most famous apology:

'nommer un objet c'est supprimer les trois quart de la jouissance de poème qui est faite du bonheur de dernier peu à peu; le suggérer, voilà le rêve. C'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole: évoquer petit à petit un objet pour montrer un état d'âme'.²⁵

What Symbolist art in music, drama, sculpture, poetry and prose seeks to convey above all is the état d'âme - the analogue to Marlow's incandescent kernel, the truth of experience.

It is this strategy, and the reasons for its deployment, which accounts for the unusual structure of Symons's autobiographical confession. Symons never names the object, his self, in any of the stories, partly because to name an object is to destroy 'le rêve', through which true wisdom is conveyed, and partly because he was aware that the self is per se unutterable in any direct form. By therefore not naming but indicating, through the medium of fictive portraits, metaphors for certain aspects of his selfhood, Symons hopes to convey the true extent of the despair at his life that he tells of in 'A Prelude to Life'. He therefore takes to explaining his self not historically or even philosophically (as, for example, Collingwood does in An Autobiography), but fictively and imaginatively.

Yet the strategy must fail. For where Symbolist doctrines posit the allegorical figure on the page and the referent, the allos, within the reader or spectator, Symons's text itself contains both figure and referent. The referent of all the allegorical figures in the text is not a transcendent meaning that is incomprehensible except

through the media of the figures. The referent is the narrating self which exposes its presence in the very first portrait. As a result of this, the text becomes explicit, and the état d'âme is dissipated, for the meaning of the text's tropes is no longer implied - the tropes are all now plain projections of the narrator. As the narrating self tells its autobiography, so too the fictive biographies of the portraits, in a matroshka-doll structure, become the referent of the narrating self in 'A Prelude to Life'. The book is thus closed within itself. It is not an imaginary portrait, or series of portraits - and therefore capable of resonances beyond itself - but an obsessive portrait of one man in his peculiar condition. Yet its form ensures that it is also closed off from its principal subject, the one that unites its disparate parts - the narcissistic self. None of the characters, not even the narrating self, become self-aware enough to see to the root of their problem. This can be seen as another deliberate Symbolist strategy, of course. If it is, then it is a wrong application of Symbolist method, for as we have seen above, narcissism requires not description but analysis of its condition in the narrative. As a result of their lack of awareness, the characters's predicament is described, hardly ever analyzed.

In theory, then, a Symbolist autobiography such as Spiritual Adventures is an anomaly. In the text, however, the situation is more complicated, for the impulses that Symons perceives in his past life are typically narcissistic drives. In the following analysis of the text I shall point out the traits of narcissism in the portraits, and analyze their effect on the book.

Such narcissistic tendencies reveal themselves in the second portrait, 'Esther Kahn'. As an actress, Esther comes to approach Symons's ideal of Duse - 'a new finer mastery of form wrought outwards from within, not from without outwards' - and indeed, 'Esther Kahn', together with all the portraits in the book, are best seen in the light of Symons's writings on the Italian actress.

A propos of Duse, Symons once asked himself the fundamental question: 'what is acting? Is it to be oneself with the utmost intensity, and to put that self into every character, or is it to have no self and be a speaking mirror?'²⁶ With the latter answer he closely associated Sarah Bernhardt's method of acting (Esther studied the methods of both actresses). In expressing her personality

on stage, she gave "that revelation of an extraordinarily interesting personality through the medium of an extraordinarily finished art" (p.145). This art reminded Symons of a musical performance where her voice 'is itself an instrument of music, and she plays upon it as a conductor plays upon an orchestra' (p.154). Her art was an extension of Irving's rhetorical, external acting into which her own personality was injected (p.7). The acting of Duse, however, was a different kind of art: 'in La Citta Morta it is Duse seen through a temperament, and the temperament is her own' (p.77). Her art seems to consist of a concentration of her personality: thus, later on in his book devoted to Duse, Symons declares that 'one sometimes forgets that Duse is acting, that she is even pretending to be Magda or Silvia; it is Duse herself who lives there, on the stage' (p.155). He acknowledges elsewhere, however, that the intention of Duse was to be 'a great impersonal force': her greatest moments 'are the moments of most intense quietness'. Descriptions of her performances emphasize that she wore hardly any make-up, her costumes were usually simple and her entrances unobtrusive (p.2).

The fusion of intense personality with impersonality may seem an impossible one, but Symons's intuition of Duse's drive to impersonality through an intensification of personality is probably a good description of her method: 'at every moment of a play in which emotion becomes sincere, intelligent, or in which it is possible to transform an artificial thing into reality, she is profoundly true to the character she is representing, by being more and more profoundly herself' (p.6). In the same essay he quotes her famous pronouncement that

'to save the theatre, the theatre must be destroyed, the actors and actresses must all die of the plague. . . They poison the air, they make art impossible. It is not drama that they play but pieces for the theatre. We should return to the Greeks, play in the open air: the drama dies of stalls and boxes and evening dress, and people who come to digest their dinner'. (p.3)

Her attraction as an actress is one of simplicity, restraint and secrecy: 'all her acting seems to come from a great depth, and to be only half-telling profound secrets' (p.6). Duse epitomizes the Symbolist aesthetic of glimpses - 'always suggestion, never statement, always a renunciation' (p.7) - and she expresses her temperament through a negation of rhetorical art, by restraining the instinct to rhetoricize

gesture and voice on the stage. Duse herself once outlined the two styles of acting which, though entirely different, have the same goal - the expression of the actress's personality on the stage:

'at Athens, in the Museum, there is the mask of a tragic actress; the passion of sorrow, seen for a moment on the face of a woman on the stage, is engraved into it, like a seal. In Rome, quite lately, they have found a bronze head, which has lain under water for centuries; the features are almost effaced, but it is beautiful, as if veiled: the water has passed over it like a caress'. (p.4)

The two images represent the rhetorical stamp of Bernhardt upon a mask which is yet clearly her face; and the almost effaced face of Duse which yet still conveys the beauty of its personal form. Symons's own metaphor a little later points up this comparison: 'with [Duse] there can be no choice, no arresting moment of repose; but an endless flowing onward of emotion, like tide flowing after tide, moulding and effacing continually' (p.5). The restraint of Duse serves to draw the spectator to the enigma of a strong personality which, while manifestly present, is also withdrawn from full exposure. As Freud pointed out in his paper 'On Narcissism', the woman's self-contentment or inaccessibility will be regarded as an 'unassailable libidinal position' ²⁷ - that is, as an exemplum of intact narcissism. Furthermore, the passive narcissism of the stage femme fatale also engenders tensions within its own role which, in the re-enactment of the breakdown of narcissistic self-sufficiency, can be a very powerful one.

The actress stands between, on the one hand, the single, self-contained figure of the dancer and, on the other, the totally available music-hall performer. Where the first by convention performs regardless of spectator, the second must make overt connections with the audience. The actress - and particularly the operatic primadonna - is self-contained in her role on stage, yet she must establish a rapport with the spectator. She exists in an unattainable, exterior world, made tantalizingly attainable by the voyeuristic bridge between spectator and actress. Her divided role (made all the more apparent by her seeming negation of personality) is an epitome of the self-consciousness of the spectator, not only as private spectator and one part of a public audience but, when he leaves the theatre, as the spectator of and participator in, the theatrum mundi; the spectator

of and participator in, the activities of the own self. The position of the artist and the self-conscious person is thus defined for Symons by the actress and particularly by Duse:

we have rarely, in real life, the leisure to watch an emotion in which we are the sharers. But there are moments, in any great crisis, when the soul seems to stand back and look out of impersonal eyes, seeing things as they are. At such moments it is possible to become aware of the beauty, the actual plastic beauty, of passionate or sorrowful emotion, as it interprets itself, in all its succession of moods, upon the face. (p.5)

The gradual shift from life to art is an almost imperceptible but nevertheless crucial step in the above passage, indicative of a falsely Archimedean view of experience. Through watching an emotion in others, the spectator manages to be outside time, the element where change and responsibility lie. This attitude is intensified when the self splits its self in order to become its own spectator and spectacle - a device that occurs repeatedly in Spiritual Adventures, and the origin of the narrative closure inherent in the book's Symbolist technique. Such an attitude gives the illusion of 'seeing things as they really are' - and the aura of confession - precisely because, now that the threatening otherness of objects has been abolished by the introjection of objects into the self's own spectacle, they can be acknowledged as 'other' by the spectator. It is a psychological ploy enacted by a narcissistic self, and one that is common to all the portraits in the book.

At first, Esther Kahn's acting could not be further from the ideal of Duse: she has to be taught her parts in meticulous and mechanical detail, and she can only understand her own performances in retrospect 'by a backward process' (p.73). Falling in love does not affect her understanding of acting in any way - through the tuition of her lover, the playwright Haygarth, she becomes merely more accomplished in learning parts by rote. It is only when he leaves her for another woman and she is 'beside herself with rage, jealousy, mortification' - the possessive emotions - that she is able to inject her personality into stage roles. The disunity Esther experiences in her life at this point (she felt 'as if her life had been broken sharply in two' - p.78) is healed through acting out her tragedy upon the stage. It is through this re-action that she returns her self to

herself. The love object is introjected, and by creating a circle of intact narcissism, she succeeds in creating a commanding stage presence. She thus comes to act like Duse - 'she had never been more restrained, more effortless; she seemed scarcely to be acting' (p.80). Her career is an inversion of Sybil Vane's, and an analogue to that of Evelyn Innes in that she learns to use the events of her life on the stage. Art is seen by Esther at first as an escape from the dreariness of her East End environment; but to achieve great art, she must merge static art and dynamic life; use her personality to become impersonal, a tragic femme fatale, that character which Freud described as essentially narcissistic.²⁸ She thereupon becomes the face whose personal features have been washed away, presenting one solution to the problem Diderot posed above -

the note had been struck, she had responded to it, as she responded to every suggestion, faultlessly; she knew that she could repeat the note, whenever she wished, now that she had once found it. There would be no variation to allow for, the actress was made at last. She might take back her lover, or never see him again, it would make no difference. It would make no difference, she repeated, over and over again, weeping uncontrollable tears. (p.82)

It is important, though, that in order to illuminate the basic change in Esther's acting I quoted from Symons's criticism. It is a serious flaw that this aspect of Esther's life is not treated in more detail, and more obliquely in the portrait. Nothing is hinted: all we learn in the story is stated blandly. The result of this is that when the change in acting technique occurs, it appears superficial and incredible, for we are given no analysis of its appearance - the loose metaphor of the 'note' that can be struck again is too vague and too much of a cliché to explain it to us.

Impersonality which is achieved through an intensification of personality in art - that is, the self withdrawn from commitment outside of itself, and therefore uncommitted even to its own self - is a major theme of Spiritual Adventures. Peter Waydelin, 'the painter of those mysterious, brutal pictures' reflects his art in his life (p.147). The basis of his aesthetic is negation - "you have to train your eye not to see. Whistler sees nothing but the fine shades, which unite into a picture in an almost bodiless way, as Verlaine writes songs almost literally "without words""

(pp.150-1). The desire is similar to that expressed by Symons in the Introduction to The Decadent Movement in Literature - 'to fix the last fine shade, the quintessence of things; to fix it fleetingly; to be a disembodied voice, and yet the voice of a human soul'.²⁹ For Waydelin this can be expressed (in a typical paradox) '"in just the opposite way: leaving in only the hard outlines"'.³⁰ His style clearly alludes to the spare ascesis of Beardsley's hair-line mode (Symons wrote a perceptive essay on Beardsley), but it is also part of the traditional theory of outline in art going back to Blake and Vasari and Pliny, a theory which relates outline to simplicity and moral purity - qualities that both Beardsley and Waydelin parody and invert in their art. In order to achieve this paradoxical impersonality and demonic innocence, Waydelin immerses himself in the grotesque and poverty-stricken world of his art - '"I fitted in theories with my facts"' (pp.160-1). At his death, his last act is to capture on paper his wife's grief-stricken attitude.

Such abnegation as Dorian indulges and Evelyn carries out, is simply the reverse side of narcissism. The clearest example of this negation occurs as one of Pater's Imaginary Portraits, 'Sebastian van Storck'. Sebastian's last act before leaving home is to tear up the sole portrait of himself in existence, leaving his philosophical journal behind; Waydelin's last action is his finest creation. Neither character leaves behind him anything except his art; the self vanishes into itself, into its art, or into nothing. Waydelin is represented as a forceful character: nevertheless he possesses the essential traits of the diaphanous temperament of Pater's anti-heroes - above all the desire for a coldly passionate withdrawal (as evinced by his theory of creation) - 'not the saint only, the artist also, and the speculative thinker, confused, jarred, disintegrated in the world, as sometimes they inevitably are, aspire for this simplicity to the last'.³¹ Thus, the narrator states that it was clear to him that there had been 'some obscure martyrdom going on' (p.161). Waydelin's use of his strange life-style may be the complete opposite to that of Esther Kahn, but its aims are identical - the self returned to its self in its art.

In this portrait, as in the portraits of Christian Trevalga and Seaward Lackland, the naivete of the narrator regarding the character's condition is deliberate; but nevertheless is an error

of tone. Whether the narrator is invisible as in Lackland's portrait, or present as in Waydelin's, or an unhappy mixture of both, as in Trevalga's, his indecision and lack of engagement with the character being portrayed produces a literally impersonal character. Trevalga and Lackland, for instance, are mannequins, around which are draped the narcissistic qualities of isolation, self-absorption and chilling disregard for the rest of society which the narrating self is most concerned to portray. They do not read as semblances of real people, but as projections of one peculiar psychological condition. Yet Symons's narratives do not contain the veiling forms of Pater's style, for example, which do not allow the reader to sense the deliberate absence of characterization in an imaginary portrait. If Symons's Symbolist autobiography is experimental, his narrative voices are largely too conventional, and arouse expectations that the characters embodied by them do not satisfy. Such a concentration upon narcissism as Symons intends needs a complexity of narrative voice that is not present in most of the portraits.

The figure of Seaward Lackland - who bears close resemblance to Sebastian van Storck, and is closest to the youthful Symons, as he is figured in 'A Prelude to Life' - represents the 'inner isolation of the individual' which, in the strict Methodist theology, tended to reveal that nightmarish isolation of the self in a world of sinful things.³² Where Sebastian coldly rationalizes a monistic One, Seaward sets up a loveless monolithic Old Testament Jehovah. He deliberately commits the worst of all sins: to imitate Christ's sacrifice, not in humility as in an imitatio Christi, but as a conscious parody - not a "'particular act of sin, but a state of wilful, determined opposition to the Holy Spirit'" (pp.224-5). When he finally decides on this course of action, he is filled with an 'exultant inner peace' (p.230). Pater points to the narcissistic basis of such an attitude: 'the moralist, indeed, might have noted that a meaner kind of pride... lent secret strength to the intellectual prejudice, which realized duty as the renunciation of all finite objects, the fastidious refusal to be or do any limited thing'.³³ However, where Pater subtly sketches the milieu of seventeenth century Dutch society that Sebastian rejects, Symons barely recreates Seaward's Methodist context. He is too blatantly a peg on which to hang a type of narcissistic asceticism. Compare, for instance, the two authors's

handling of their characters's love for the sea:

and, in truth, the sea which Sebastian so much loved, and with so great a satisfaction and sense of wellbeing in every hint of its nearness, is never far distant in Holland. Invading all places, stealing under one's feet, insinuating itself everywhere along an endless network of canals (by no means such formal channels as we understand by the name, but picturesque rivers, with sedgy banks and haunted by innumerable birds) its incidents present themselves oddly even in one's park or woodland walks; the ship in full sail appearing suddenly among the great trees or above the garden wall, where we had no suspicion of the presence of water. In the very conditions of life in such a country there was a standing force of pathos. The country itself shared the uncertainty of the individual human life; and there was pathos also in the constantly renewed, heavily-taxed labour, necessary to keep the native soil, fought for so unselfishly, there at all; with a warfare that must still be maintained when that other struggle with the Spaniard was over.³⁴

Every day he went in to the Wesleyan day-school at St. Ives, and as he walked there and back along the cliff-path, generally alone, all sorts of whimsical ideas turned over in his head, ideas that came to him out of books, and out of what people said, and out of the queer world in which he found himself, half land and half water. It was always changing about him and yet always there, in the same place, with its regular and yet unaccountable tides and harvests. Sometimes there was a storm at sea and all the boats did not come back, and the people he had talked with yesterday had gone, like the stone he kicked over the cliff in walking, or he saw them carried up the beach with covered faces. Death is always about the life of fishermen, and he saw it more visibly and a thing more natural and expected than it must seem to most children. (pp.203-4)

Where Pater draws together Sebastian's feelings and the geography and society of Holland in telling details and juxtaposed clauses, Symons's description is too general, too predictable and naive. 'Always changing ... always there' really describes nothing, and contains no surprise of movement, in description or syntax; while 'in the same place' is redundant. The sentence contrasts markedly with the surprise of 'the ship in full sail appearing suddenly among the great trees or above the garden wall', with its precise placing of the adverb, the height of the 'great' trees contributing to the stately height of the ship in 'full sail', and the deliberate vagueness of apparently any garden wall. Where there are many details of the sea and its qualities that Sebastian loved, there are none in Symons's portrait that point up the sea's queerness: we are merely told by the narrator that the sea seemed odd to Seaward.

If most of the imaginary portraits in Spiritual Adventures

concern the Symbolist dualism of life and art, and narcissistic aesthetics erected by artists to deal with it, the following two portraits concern the artists in life - those who, in the words of Pater have 'treated life in the spirit of art'.³⁵ Thus, 'to Daniel Roserra life was a matter of careful cultivation'. In the first paragraph of 'An Autumn City' the imaginary portrait's reductivist theme is announced, together with its narcissistic analogue - 'he tended his soul as one might tend some rare plant; careful above most things of the earth it was to take root in' (p.177). Roserra is deeply susceptible to the Paterian 'influence of places', that 'image a place makes for itself in the consciousness'. This aesthetic manner of relating to places is merely an extension of the 'religion of the eyes' described in a memorable passage at the end of 'A Prelude to Life'. Earlier in that portrait, Symons says of himself, 'from as early a time as I can remember, I had no very clear consciousness of anything external to myself... I existed, others also existed; but between us there was an impassable gulf' (pp.28-9). The description is an accurate one of that state of solipsistic narcissism where there are no definable borders between inner and outer; where the alien, potentially hostile otherness of external objects is, at first, not even acknowledged as such because the essentially unstable and weakened psyche cannot afford to see anything but itself in its environment. Such persons cannot bear to be the object of hostility - for instance, Roserra suffers from an inexplicable dread of Livia's resentment 'like one who has to find his way through a camp of his enemies in the dark' (p.194); Evelyn Innes declares '"I dread a face of stone"'; and Pater, in an unpublished essay, contemplates the 'thought of those averted or saddened faces grown suddenly strange to us, refusing their recognition of us in what was not their way'.³⁶

The anti-hero of 'An Autumn City' is Arles, and the portrait is the best in the book because, for once, Symons finds a symbol that is the equal of his fascination with narcissism. In this it contrasts strongly with the other portraits in the book. The city itself is a Symbolist version of Kallipolis, of Beata Urbs or Yeatsian Byzantium. There men do not grow old because they are old. An air of death and decay clings to Arles, 'hinting of every gentle,

resigned, reflective way of fading out of life, of effacing oneself in a world to which one no longer attaches any value; always remembering itself, always looking into a mournfully veiled mirror which reflects something at least of what it was' (p.184). The effect of this sentence is of a turning in, a reflecting, in both senses of the verb; and indeed the city is total stasis - its streets 'bring one back always to one's starting-point' (p.192). It is a work of art, and as such holds a strong attraction for Roserra who views it aesthetically, as one might view a cathedral. For Roserra, indeed, the cloisters of St. Trophime epitomise his impressions of the place, as well as explaining their attraction - 'there is no order, or division of time; one seems shut off equally from the present and from any appreciable moment of the past; shut in with the same vague and timeless Autumn that has moulded Arles into its own image' (p.192). That the place held similarly strong impressions for Symons can be gauged by the fact that he breaks off the past tense narrative of events and places seen from either Daniel's or Livia's point of view to present a eulogy upon Arles in his own present tense voice. Such an intrusion can be justified as no intrusion since Roserra and Livia, his wife, are manifestly fictive projections of the narrating Symons, not the ground, *Burroughs*, or focus of the narrative. The autumnal imagery here, as elsewhere in the portrait, is that of the classic Symbolist 'country of the mind', a secular paradise which does not exist wholly in the mind, nor, certainly, in real places; but in the uniquely individual reaction of landscape or psyche.³⁷ And since Roserra and Livia are sensed as a narrator's fictive projections, they exist on a level with the landscape in which they saturate themselves - Daniel in cool, mirroring Arles; Livia in hot, garish Marseilles. Roserra's self is at peace in Arles and not Marseilles because Arles presents him with the external analogue to his 'paysage d'âme'.

Livia cannot appreciate what she thinks of as the 'penitential chilliness of Arles'; there was no 'active world within her which could transmute everything into its own image'. This statement is an exact description of the solipsistic strategy that Roserra adopts in Arles, and which is contrasted with Livia's lack of 'sympathetic submissiveness' (p.193). Daniel is above all

a spectator; observation, introspection and reflection replace interaction. His solitariness before his fatal marriage, his obsessive pursuit of personal awareness and feeling is a defence against bruising social relations. Such an attitude carried over to close human relations, however, ends disastrously. The narrative voice makes it plain that Daniel marries Livia because he is fascinated by her personality: withdrawn, enigmatic, dark, she is peculiarly attractive to a narcissistic personality, presenting as she does, an adult exemplum of self-sufficient, intact narcissism. But the narrative does not simply tell: it hints ironically, at the gulf between the two people: 'everything delighted her; she seemed even to admire a little indiscriminately. She thought the Sainte-Chapelle the most beautiful thing in Paris'. (p.180) The relative sophistication of this voice, together with the details of Arles, gives Roserra's narcissism more scope to be developed, and succeeds, for once, in cloaking the explicit relation of the portrait to the everpresent prototype of 'A Prelude to Life'. The portrait's Symbolist allos can then resonate in the reader's mind in a way that does not occur in any of the other portraits.

Perhaps the weakest portrait in the book is that of 'The Childhood of Lucy Newcombe'. It is interesting, however, in that it is an example of the importance which is attached to the figure of the child in narcissistic literature. As Freud points out, the child is a strong image of intact narcissism and a natural focus for those who desire such a state: 'at the most touchy point of all in the narcissistic system, the immortality of the ego, which is so hard pressed by reality, security is achieved by taking refuge in the child'. Untouched by the ravages of experience, the child is seen as an ideal person: illness, death, renunciation of enjoyment, restrictions on his own will, are not to touch him; the laws of nature, like those of society, are to be abrogated in his favour.³⁸ In literature this attitude of fascinated idealization of the child found its apotheosis in Kenneth Graham's semi-autobiographical The Golden Age and Dream Days.

'But the myth of happy childhood reflects also the truth that, as in the myth of paradise lost, there was a time before animalistic innocence was lost, before pleasure-seeking nature and pleasure-forbidding culture clashed in the battle called education, a battle in which the child is always the loser'.³⁹ The imaginary

portrait of Lucy is an account of such 'animalistic innocence', and Lucy's education in the harshness of the world which presses in upon her when her parents die: she 'buried her childhood, on that day of the funeral, in the grave with her father' (p.143). However, the portrait evinces none of the fresh innocence and sheer zest for life that animates Graham's collections. The brooding sense of death hangs around almost every description in the story. Where Pater, in 'The Child in the House' delicately outlines such an atmosphere, and Kipling in his short story, 'They', merely suggests it, Symons insists upon it heavily: 'the strange little girl who sat among the graves, weaving garlands, and who would run up to them so shyly, and with so serious a smile, offering them her flowers, seemed to these ladies rather a disquieting little person, as if she, like her flowers, had a churchyard air about her' (p.123). The incident is comparable to the scene in Gaston de Latour, where Gaston, descending from the tower of Jean de Beauce, finds an 'amiable little child who had a kind of genius for tranquillity'.⁴⁰ But where the little child only briefly enters the novel - and can therefore exist as a symbolic figure merely - we are never in any doubt that Lucy is the subject of Symons's portrait. What is emphasized with almost solipsistic obsessiveness is the break-down of narcissistic self-sufficiency in Lucy that occurs while her parents are dying. The result is that the story's mawkish tone invites us to dwell morbidly upon the child when there is in fact no artistic justification in the text for such concentration. The only justification is not literary but psychological - the child, as a figure of intact narcissism, is a projection of the narrator in 'A Prelude to Life', a projection of his own imagined childhood.

'Christian Trevalga' and 'Extracts from the Journal of Henry Luxulyan', with their uncanny prediction of Symons's own psychotic collapse, present the true end of the narcissistic quest. Christian Trevalga is a figure of complete solipsism and what appears at first to be intact narcissism. As a child, his feelings parallel those of Symons's youth - 'outward things, too, as well as people, meant very little to him, and meant less and less as time went on' (p.91). Apart from his music, he has no desires and no personality. Unlike Esther Kahn, he fails to 'find himself, to become real, by falling in love' or out of love because, unable to love - like Dorian and Esther - and trapped in his art, he attempts to liberate himself

by experiencing emotions in life(p.96). But that part of himself which wishes to remain in the static world of art will not tolerate such an entry into reality - Rana Vaughan 'vitalized him, [literally] drew him away from himself; and he feared her'(p.99). He can only experience reality from the cage, not the palace, of art which, when dwelt in continuously, leads inevitably to madness. Thus, the descriptions of Trevalga's state of mind become more de-humanized: his earlier vision of himself as a spider on the ceiling becomes, as he approaches his break-down, more abstractly distanced and mechanistic: 'caged already... the prisoner of his own fingers, as they worked, independently of himself, mechanically, doing their so many miles of promenade a day over the piano'(pp.92,101). His sense of selfhood eventually crumbles like the figures made of bread-crumbs which his mother used to make, and of which he was always so afraid: the distinctions between inner and outer erode away completely; acute self-consciousness becomes a psychotic self-splitting, and the self is 'itself beholding, from itself aloof'. Trevalga's break-down, once again, is described directly and factually. Nothing is obliquely hinted or left to the reader, with the result that the portrait contains no drama or tension, and does not suggest anything beyond itself. The metaphors of the cage and the crumbling figures are too obvious to retain any meaning, apart from their immediate application to Trevalga's condition. Like the portrait, they are inward turning, narcissistic.

The framing form of 'Christian Trevalga', with its clumsy shifts from impersonal narrator to diary fragments and from past to present, is put to better use in 'Extracts from the Journal of Henry Luxulyan', where it offers different perspectives upon the story. Thus, outside the portrait entirely, but still legitimately 'there' on account of the autobiographical intent of 'A Prelude to Life', is the prototype narrator. Within him is a persona whose principle aim in the portrait is not autobiography, but a biographical memoir of Henry Luxulyan (although he presents us with a fragment of autobiography at the end) based on Luxulyan's journal. Luxulyan, in turn, is in the midst of writing a book on Attila; and it is among the fragments of this incomplete book that the persona finds the fragmented autobiography of the journal - which is, of course, to a certain extent an autobiography of Symons as well. In this endless circle, no one presents

the whole truth. The persona is baffled by Luxulyan's book on Attila (we are never told if it is a novel or biography, and its uncertain status mirrors that of Spiritual Adventures): it is 'like an enigma of which the key is missing' (p.243). He is troubled by the journal too, and - in a further matroshka-doll structure - finds two letters in a woman's hand, which he chivalrously burns without reading. The key to the enigma of the journal is thus lost, and the ominous hints of the persona in the epilogue, that the sinister Baron had a hand in Luxulyan's death, or the Baroness's, or both, remain hints only. All the portraits in this portrait are, in some way or other, incomplete formally; and this is significant of the more radical and disturbing psychological incompleteness of all the portraits in the book.

Luxulyan writes of his fears and scruples in the journal "as if they belonged to somebody else, in whose psychology I am interested" (p.262); and his ideal position in life is as "an interested spectator of other people's lives" (p.280). Yet his long affair with the Baroness prevents such self-absorption; and Luxulyan realizes the narcissistic nature of his response to the Baroness's love for him - "is it that love creates, not love, but a flattered readiness to be loved?" (p.297) As Freud pointed out, 'not being loved lowers the self-regarding feelings, while being loved raises them'.⁴¹ Imprisoned in his split, self-conscious self, Luxulyan cannot love because he dare not risk his self in love-relations with another.

He goes to Venice in order to recover from an unspecified illness, but it is in Venice that the final break-down occurs. Seeking "the oblivion of water, of silence, the unreal life of sails", he finds himself gradually surrounded by images of madness (p.301). The double nature of Venice, as symbolized by stone in water, comes to reflect Luxulyan's own unresolved schizoid tendencies, his precarious hold on reality. The obsessive images and repetitious phrases point up his disturbed condition: "I have been ill, I am better, I am in Venice". He is still acutely self-conscious, however - "sitting at any one of these stations one gathers as many floating strays of life as a post in the sea gathers weeds" (p.302). At first, he appreciates the freedom and space in Venice, and at this point the beauty and solidity of the architecture is emphasized.

Gradually, however, as his hold on reality slips away, nebulous images of water come to predominate, and, as with Proust's Marcel, Mann's von Aschenbach, and Evelyn Innes in Venice, there occurs a nightmarish separation of self from self-identity and external reality, symbolized here by the images of "this insidious coiling of water about one". Thus, "bells break out, and ring wildly, as if out of the water", and in the storm that threatens, as it seems to Luxulyan, to overwhelm Venice, he "seemed to be on the shore of some horrible island, and I had to cross the sea, which there was no crossing" (pp.307, 310).

As with many of the portraits, however, Luxulyan's breakdown is ineptly handled because it is not given enough detailed analysis. To compare Luxulyan's account with Marcel's is to realize the thinness of Symons's characterization of mental collapse; nor is it Proust's rich and elaborate prose that creates the fundamental difference. Quite simply, Symons's description is bald description, Proust's a finely detailed description - which is also an analysis - of Marcel's condition.

Luxulyan's state of mind is much better presented in one of Symons's best poems, 'Venice', from the collection Knave of Hearts 1894-1908 -

Water and marble and that silentness
Which is not broken by a wheel or hoof;
A city like a water-lily, less
Seen than reflected, palace wall and roof,
In the unfruitful waters motionless,
Without one living grass's green reproof;
A city without joy or weariness,
Itself beholding, from itself aloof.⁴²

The still, brooding atmosphere evoked by the fitful lines suggests barely-suppressed anxiety and hysteria, held in check only because of the tension created by the significant absence of a main verb. We get glimpses of violence - 'broken by a wheel' brings to mind the phrase 'broken on a wheel' - and a sinister evocation of the city's unreal atmosphere as it is felt by the poet. The clashing sibilants, recurring rhymes, ryme royale and adjective-noun-adjective combination all suggest sterile reflections and visual stasis. Yet the poem is not so much a description of Venice as a depiction of the poet's state of mind. Existing as stone in water, stasis in flux, art in nature, Venice is a metaphor for the duality between

the ceaseless fluidity of inner impressions and the static solidity of external objects (objects which are further hypostatized by being artistic creations); and the city is the image of the poet's anxiety and fear of such an overwhelming conflict in the world. Dread of pure potential drives him to that seemingly most inorganic of plants, the water-lily; but anxiety at the passive constrictions of such an attitude of stasis makes him flee to the aquatic flux. The poet yearns to be free of this oscillation, to take 'such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make/Of hammered gold and gold enamelling'. But such a city, with its split reflecting self, 'without joy or weariness,/Itself beholding, from itself aloof', is not an Urbs Beata: the poem's tone reveals to us how far from such an ideal of unity the poet really is.

The poem also reveals how shallow is Symons's portrait of Luxulyan, for the linguistic and imaginative complexity present in the poem is entirely absent in the portrait's prose. Thus, Luxulyan's relations with the Baroness change during his break-down. Where previously he feared the woman's love as animalistic, and saw in her appeal for intimacy only an aggressive intent to overwhelm (pp.251-2), the Baroness now appears to him as "only kind and gentle". But we are told this, and it is never demonstrated in the diary apart from Luxulyan's bland statement. Here, as in many portraits, Symons appears to be trying to press too much into the portrait, and resorting to generalization instead of telling detail: "I am no longer afraid of her love; I seem to have become a child, and her love is maternal. When I look at her I can see her face as it was, as it is, without a scar; I see that she is beautiful" (pp.310-11). The scar, symbol of Luxulyan's loathing and fear of women, vanishes for him with his feelings of repugnance not because he can appreciate the otherness, the unique individuality of the Baroness, but because he sees her as a mother figure - no longer a vicious combination of nerveuse and femme fatale, but a mater dolorosa, with Luxulyan as her dying child. The mother figure is no threat to him, but promises security and protection: she is the living equivalent of the infinitude of the sea. All this is made too obvious by Luxulyan's statements: "I have had so singularly little feeling of personality, I seem to have become so suddenly impersonal... The world, ideas, sensations, all are fluid, and I flow through them, like a gondola carried along by the current;

no, like a weed adrift on it" (p.311). At the end of the journal and his life, Luxulyan escapes from the prison of autoscopism not by countering his nausea in existential choice, but by refusing actuality, retreating further into psychotic narcissism and then, delusively free of his earlier anxiety and Todesangst, by seeing himself as an organic part of the flux of time and existence. There is certainly irony in this situation, but there is none in the text; nor does Symons make use of the persona at this critical point, as he might have done.

This ending to Luxulyan's life contradicts the movement of the rest of the portrait and Spiritual Adventures. After all, the fragmentation of the book on Attila and the journal, the sinister mysteriousness of the persona's epilogue - with its atmosphere redolent of 'My Last Duchess' - and the loss of the key all point to a classic confrontation between the narcissistic alternatives of self-love or complete absence of self. Luxulyan escapes both by retreating into a totally narcissistic condition where the incessant hostility of the external is neutralized and where the ceaseless demands and desires of the weakened, self-conscious psyche are stilled by its absorption in an oceanic oneness with the world. The character, the portrait and the book all fail to express adequately a type of solipsistic narcissism, because the basic structure of the book does not provide a proper literary vehicle for this type of selfhood. As a result of this, and the book's bland narrative style, Spiritual Adventures remains an interesting failure.

Conclusion

The model of selfhood that has been examined in this chapter is one that springs from the psychological condition of narcissism. All of the works examined here are structured around a model of narcissistic selfhood. The way in which this model is present in the texts is discussed in the chapter. But models of selfhood are never merely present in a text - they affect the text by contributing to its effect on the reader. This chapter has not only pointed out instances of narcissistic selfhood in the texts, but also tried to show how the texts have been affected by them. At this point one must utter a caveat. To say that a work's model is a narcissistic model is not to

condemn either model or literary work. Robert Musil, Hoffmannsthal, Proust, James and Rilke all wrote works that take the narcissistic self as their subject, but which are not narcissistic works.

The model of narcissistic selfhood holds special difficulties for anyone attempting its aesthetic mediation in literature; and these difficulties are exhibited by the texts examined here. The principal difficulty is that narcissism requires careful embodiment in the text, for in the tendency of its structure to yearn for pure potential of character, infinite variety of experience, and solipsism, a writer may be led astray in his literary presentment of it. It is significant that the myth of Narcissus is rarely a story of such, more a tableau expressing solipsistic infinity and a vicious circle of events situated almost wholly in the mind. Unless a writer is sufficiently aware of this major difficulty, he will produce work that is flawed by the qualities of the very selfhood he is attempting to create.

Thus, as readers, our strongest sense of Dorian Gray is not in the novel's dramatic scenes - oddly enough, for a writer famous above all for his plays - but in the intense descriptive passages, where his whimsies, dreams and wish-fantasies, whether delightful or rack-ridden, are presented in the narrative's tone that contains no hint of irony or criticism. The use of mannerist prose in these passages throughout the novel is indicative of a misunderstanding of the way in which aesthetic mediation of a model of selfhood occurs. For the style sympathizes with Dorian, so that neither in narrative passages nor, certainly, in the witticisms of Lord Henry, is there an indication of saving irony that would lend depth and perspective to the shallow, obsessive portrait we are given of the beautiful young man.

Moore's two novels are flawed by a narrative that lacks tension and irony. This narrative does not indicate, hint or expose, but tells the reader flatly. Its honesty becomes naivete, its variety, merely monotonous indecision. It is at once too close to Evelyn to criticize or analyze her plight in the world, and too distant from her condition to describe it convincingly. In spite of Moore's many revisions, the narrative still colludes with Evelyn's narcissistic condition, producing monotony of incident, and characters who barely develop.

Symons's remarkable Symbolist structure in Spiritual Adventures fails because it is self-referential, each portrait merely a mirror for the narrating self of 'A Prelude to Life'. Forced to mirror this narcissistic self, they can have no independent existence as portraits;

and this is the cause of their curiously puppet-like effect. Nor do they ever come to a realization of their narcissistic condition. They are presented in the portraits, in triumph and disaster, as icons of the narcissistic plight, not as analyses of it. As a consequence of all this, there is no dynamic movement or extension of meaning in the book, merely more of the same; and there is no reason why the book ought to end where it does. The result is a monotony of character type that leaves the reader dissatisfied with the lack of character extension beyond mental crises that appear different, but which are really the same mental condition repeated again and again.

It must be said, of course, that these three authors did not always deal with models of narcissistic selfhood in their work. Wilde's prose generally is by no means as mannerist as it is in Dorian Gray; the time and effort that Moore invested in his double novel paid generous dividends in his later novels; and Symons's criticism is free from the flaws of his autobiographical experiment. In the texts discussed here, all three authors realize what their true subject is, and the not inconsiderable complexity they attain in describing the narcissistic model derives from this realization. But what they lack in these works is an awareness of the model they are describing sufficient to allow them to analyse and use the model. Because they are not sufficiently aware of the self's model they describe, they are unable to effect a complete transformation of certain emotions and attitudes into words. As a result, they are used by their model. Their work is exciting not because it is good art, but because of its vicarious display of wish-fantasies. We all enact such wish-fantasies in our own lives, in our night thoughts, but we know them to have no existence worth mentioning apart from the needs they serve - unless they are part of a larger and more interesting artistic whole. In the works criticized in this chapter, as in for instance Eugene Fromentin's Dominique, Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes, and most of Jean Anouilh's plays, a certain emotional excitement is necessary in the reader, one which stems principally not from delight in the novelist's art, but from a participation in the wishes which the story represents.

Take away this excitement, and we are left with flawed literary works. The comparison drawn by Maurice Blanchot between

Jean Santeuil and A la recherche is illuminating in this regard.⁴³

He suggests that in Jean Santeuil, Proust was concerned with portraying his hero's life in separate, static icons, concerned more with individual parts in the novel than with the novel as a whole. As a result, we experience discontinuity in reading the book. But Proust abandoned Jean Santeuil for a narrative in A la recherche that exhibits unbroken continuity and tight construction, one that unifies the scattered moments and passages of Jean Santeuil by being a very different narrative. The narrative variety and continuity of tone in the later novel then control a rich and effective harmony, for they exist as responses to the specific expressive problems brought to Proust's attention by the writing of the earlier book. In the works examined here the same process, not of revision, but of rewriting, would have had to be carried out before they could successfully embody their subject. In the process the authors would have had to become aware of the expressive problems inherent in the literary representation of their model. None of them did so - Wilde's revisions, and nearly all of Moore's, were not radical rewritings of their narratives, merely corrections of them.

These works are dominated, then, by models of narcissistic selfhood, to the detriment of the works's overall narrative structures. Yet narcissistic models can be, and have been, used to serve more aesthetic functions. It is a nice irony that Le Grand Meaulnes and Du côté chez Swann appeared in the same year: in the former, the novel is dominated by narcissism and nostalgia; in the second, narcissism and nostalgia are assimilated by Marcel into his book's uniform tone of reminiscence and introspection. Three years earlier, Rainer Maria Rilke's novel, The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge treated the relations between narcissism and the self with an awareness of the narcissistic model that is both cause and symptom of the novel's literary depth - a depth to which Wilde, Moore and Symons aspire in their works in this chapter, but do not attain.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. Otto F. Kernberg, 'Factors in the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personalities', Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 18 (1970), pp.52-3. Reprinted in Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism (New York, 1975), pp.227-62.
2. The Picture of Dorian Gray, ed. by Isobel Murray (London, 1974), pp. 24-5. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
3. Complete Shorter Fiction, op.cit., p.255.
4. Other examples of the conversion of life to art occur on pages 36, 48, 50-53, 76, 105.
5. Letters, p.425. Compare Wilde's use of the word here to his use of it in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', in The Artist as Critic, op.cit., p.287. The word occurs ten times in Dorian Gray - pp.22, 49, 58, 66, 91, 99, 108, 143, 201, 220.
6. See Hutchinson's Popular Botany, A.E. Knight and Edward Step (London, [no date]), pp.341-2:

the Common Honeysuckles are adapted for fertilization exclusively by long-tongued crepuscular and nocturnal moths; and why? Because the wax-like tubes are long and narrow - too long for short-tongued insects to reach the honey while standing at the mouth of the flower, and too narrow to enable them to descend bodily into the nectary.

Wilde may have had in mind another property of woodbine. See Flowers of the Field, C.A. Johns, revised by G.S. Boulger (London, 1899), pp.341-2:

though highly ornamental to our woods, [woodbine] is decidedly injurious to young trees, clasping them so tightly as to distort their growth. Handsome twisted walking-sticks (generally Hazel) are thus formed, but the growth of the tree is greatly checked

- a neat analogy of art supplanting nature, as well as of Lord Henry's influence on Dorian. It is perhaps worth noting that in the first version of the novel, published in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (July, 1890, p.3), Wilde had written 'black-crocketed spires of the early June hollyhocks', and changed this in the book version to 'straggling woodbine'.

7. See Hutchinson's Popular Botany, pp.376-7.
8. See Isobel Murray, 'Some Elements in the Composition of The Picture of Dorian Gray', Durham University Journal, LXIV (1972), p.225.
9. Another example, too long to quote here, may be seen by comparing the passage in Lippincott, p.41, beginning 'When the dawn was just breaking...' and ending at 'the portrait Basil Hallward had painted on him' with its cognate revision on pp.88-9.
10. Richard Le Gallienne, The Romantic Nineties (London, 1926), p.234.

11. Evelyn Innes (London, 1908), p.vi.
12. The editions used here are the first editions, reprinted in the series 'Novels of Faith and Doubt', selected by Robert Lee Wolff (New York and London, 1975), vol. 18. Further references to the novels are included in the text. For specific examples of the narcissistic traits mentioned, see, respectively, pp.122, 153, 140, 264, 242.
13. Denis Diderot and William Archer, The Paradox of Acting and Masks or Faces? Diderot translated by W.H. Pollock (New York, 1957), p.14.
14. For further discussion of Duse and acting, see the section on Symons in this chapter.
15. Marcel Proust, Remembrance of Things Past, translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Frederick A. Blossom, 2 vols. (New York, 1932), II, pp.837-8.
16. Hannah Arendt, Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewish Woman, revised edition (New York, 1974), p.21. Quoted in Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World (New Haven, 1982), p.87.
17. See John Denny Fischer, 'Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa by George Moore: A Variorum Edition', Ph.D. thesis, University of Illinois, 1958.
18. Sister Teresa (London, 1909), p.130.
19. Evelyn Innes, op.cit., p.191.
20. Spiritual Adventures (London, 1905). The edition used here is the reprinted 1905 edition, in the series, 'The Decadent Consciousness', selected by Ian Fletcher and John Stokes (New York and London, 1977), vol.24, p.3. Further references to this edition are given in the text after quotations.
21. Reprinted in Eleonora Duse (London, 1926), p.31.
22. Le Symbole chez Verhaëren (Paris, 1924), p.17.
23. Lionel Johnson, Post Liminium: Collected Essays and Critical Papers (London, 1911), p.86.
24. Arthur Symons, London Nights (London, 1895), 'La Mèlinite: Moulin Rouge', lls.9-10.
25. Gustave Thibaudet, La Poesie de Stéphane Mallarmé (Paris, 1926), p.110.
26. Eleonora Duse, op.cit., p.77. Further references to this edition are given in the text after quotations.
27. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, translated under the General Editorship of James Strachey, 24 vols. (London, 1957), vol.14, 'On Narcissism: An Introduction', p.89.
28. Ibid., p. 89.
29. Dramatis Personae (London, 1923), p.106.
30. The paradox is symbolized by the antinomian nature of Waydelin's adopted deity, Dionysus Zagreus.

31. Pater, Miscellaneous Studies, New Library Edition (London, 1910), 'Diaphaneité', p.249.
32. See M. Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, first published, 1904-5, translated by T. Parsons (London, 1930), pp.104-5.
33. Imaginary Portraits, New Library Edition (London, 1910), 'Sebastian van Storck', p.112.
34. Ibid., pp.92-3.
35. 'Diaphaneité', op.cit., p.249.
36. Evelyn Innes, op.cit., p.153. Houghton Library, Harvard, Unpublished MSS of Walter H. Pater, 'Moral Philosophy', (17), sheet 4.
37. Compare Pater, The Renaissance, op.cit., pp.138-9.
38. Works, op.cit., vol.14, p.91.
39. Ernest C. Schnachtel, 'On Memory and Childhood Amnesia', in A Study of Interpersonal Relations, edited by Patrick Mullaney (New York, 1949), pp.46-7.
40. New Library Edition (London, 1910), p.42.
41. Works, op.cit., vol.14, p.98. What Freud means by 'self-regarding' is not merely self-consciousness, or even conscience, but also self-respect.
42. (London, 1913), p.38.
43. 'Jean Santeuil (II)', La nouvelle revue française, No.21 (septembre 1954), pp.482-3.

CHAPTER FOUR THE NOSTALGIC SELF

From this the poem springs: that we live in a place
That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves
And hard it is in spite of blazoned days

The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (New York, 1954,
reprinted 1978) 'Notes toward a Supreme Fiction', p.381.

i. The Well-Beloved: The Questing Self

It may seem odd to talk of a nostalgic model of selfhood: surely nostalgia exists as a momentary state of mind, no more? How, then, may the self's model, its structure of existence and identity, be wrought from this? The answer is quite simple. As with a narcissist's longing for pure potential and endless variety, the nostalgic moment, when dwelt in frequently, is a symptom of a malaise whose causes are metaphysical, and deeply embedded in a way of treating the world and time. How does a nostalgic self see being and time, and what are the literary consequences of this view? It is the purpose of the next few pages to define a nostalgic selfhood, and to state its general literary form, before examining examples of its embodiment in detail, in three texts.

Nostalgia is in essence a recollection. Reduced to its etymological derivatives, it is pain - $\alpha\lambda\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ - for the return home - $\nu\omicron\omicron\tau\omicron\varsigma$. Home is essentially the identity we materialize in things outside of ourselves by living in certain places, among certain arrangements of objects in the world. To find the world familiar therefore, involves a familiarity with our past; an external scene and a particular, individualizing history simultaneously become available to us. Such a familiarity is necessary if we are to live in the world with any sense of continuity. But an excessive clinging to this temporal arrangement of the self results in nostalgia. The self seeks in a vicarious history for itself, by-passing the relation it must forge through acceptance of the otherness of things in time.

Home is therefore the unique arrangement of the self's past. Pain is felt when the self longs for this past order, which pre-supposes its absence for the self in the present moment. The pleasures of nostalgia are, in effect, pleasure only as desires,

not as experiences of actual contact with real and new things or people. The life of fantasy and desire is what a nostalgic person really wants: the past is sought not in a flow of decisions, but as past desire, something which may be desired now.

Nostalgia is thus at one remove from narcissism, in that it is not the world or even the glamour cast upon it that mirrors the self, but the desire for the desire of such reflection. Unable to bear solitude, terrified of death, miserable at the passing brevity of satisfactions, the nostalgic person places all his real hope for the future in retrospective desire: in pursuit, disillusionment, renewed pursuit of desire. The nostalgic self is soon aware that he does not really want the object of his desire — only the desire itself; and that he encourages the illusion that he wants something outside of himself so as to enjoy what is already part of him — his memories.

What Freud said of the persistence of the narcissistic behaviour pattern holds true for the nostalgic self also: it is difficult for the self to relinquish this pleasure when it has been enjoyed habitually. Given the choice of a delectable-seeming union with the self's own fantasies of the past, or attempting to live as a as an existing selfhood, the nostalgic self is attracted to the first alternative. It feels that relentless temporality condemns it to an incomplete and unfulfilling existence. Which is, of course, precisely what nostalgia proves to be, after all. Pain becomes omnipresent, arising not only from the contrast of an ideal past and discordant present, but also from the inescapable knowledge that the paradigm to which the disordered present is contrasted is itself a fantasy.

These attitudes of the self towards experience constitute the content of nostalgic art, and to a large extent determine the traits of its literary form. The dual movement of recollection and anticipation, longing and desire, is a motif of the nostalgic character, and its wave-like gather and dissolution of experience is embodied in literary forms that exist self-consciously in oscillation, in hesitant, polar movement. It is a dangerous model of selfhood to create in literature precisely because its manifestations — homelessness, homesickness and, ultimately, its death wish — are reactions against the world and, as such, liable to give rise to a static and indecisive literary form. Furthermore, if a writer is not sufficiently aware of the workings of the nostalgic selfhood in the text, his writing may itself become nostalgic — often unbeknown to himself —

and therefore flawed. In one novel and collections of poetry and criticism, we shall see how this nostalgic dual movement, arising from the model of nostalgic selfhood, determines the form and character of literary production. Thus, in Hardy's last novel, The Well-Beloved, his theme is not, as in Tess or Jude the Obscure, the clash of conflicting versions of reality within the novel, but an exploration of one man's obsession - a mania peculiarly nostalgic in character.

It is the most puzzling of all Hardy's novels, for there appears to be an incongruity between the subject-matter and its treatment, and between the subject-matter and the idea at its heart. In his Preface to the novel Hardy said of it that 'the interest aimed at is of an ideal or subjective nature'.¹ The story appears to have germinated from 'the remark of a sculptor that he had often pursued a beautiful ear, nose, chin, etc. about London in omnibuses and on foot'.² This pursuit recalls Arthur Symonds's 'religion of the eyes', and indeed the dilemma behind such a notion lies at the heart of the novel. The possibility of treating the art experience as the sole end of the art object - an attitude which will be examined closer in the next chapter - interested Hardy; and the theme of the pursuit of Beauty was nothing new to him: Fitzpiers, Angel and Jude all follow their individual Sangraals. But where both The Woodlanders and Tess are primarily tragic novels, with the pursuer revealed as either sensual or selfish, The Well-Beloved can hardly be termed a tragic novel, and the pursuer of Beauty pays heed to more generous impulses than self-satisfaction. Hardy stressed this gentler, less sombre tone in his alteration of the serialized story for publication as a book seven years later, omitting Jocelyn's attempted suicide and his bitter laughter in the last lines. The effect of the novel's ending has been seen by critics generally as an improvement on the melodramatic conclusion to the serial version; but this change, as with the tenderly mocking tone throughout, may also be seen as a deliberately evasive manoeuvre on the part of Hardy. And what he is evading is the subject of his novel - the nostalgic self. Most of his evasion is occasioned by the complex form of narrative and lies in the reasons he adopted this type of narrative. It is to this that I shall turn first, before examining Hardy's treatment of the nostalgic quest in the novel.

Given how central the idea of a pursuit of unattainable beauty is to Hardy's oeuvre, and how frequently it results in tragedy, it would appear strange that in The Well-Beloved, the theme's clearest manifestation should be essentially comic, a fantasy. Yet it is precisely because the theme is so crystal clear in this 'Sketch of a Temperament' that Hardy adopted the mask of comedy. To see this more clearly we must first define in what sense the novel is comic. Its comedy is not that represented by Tess's perception of the daemonic grate and fender - a bitter, mocking satire on the human condition, such as we find at some point or other in most of the novels and above all The Dynasts - nor the pitiless cosmic laughter of the President of the Immortals. Its comedy, as befits a novel about a sculptor, concerns form rather than content.

Perhaps the most common denominator in the late nineteenth century novel was the tension generated by the resistance of nature and society against any attempt at forcing them into individualized versions of themselves. The protagonist, faced with his antagonist, social context, must learn to adapt his individuality to such an environment if he is to survive. In the main, the novel celebrated this victory of social centripetence. The protagonist's version of the world and his attempts to realize it are continually undercut by the irony that exists merely by fact of the presence of pre-existent world, most often Darwinian and utilitarian. Recognition of the possibilities latent in this irony, though, may actually help an author to create an individuality by supplying him with a crucial ironic distance from the text, a comic mask. The sorry plight of the hero as he rebounds from brick-reality is a suitably comic fate for over-reaching aspirations. The laughter it engenders 'is the literary genre of the conservative parties',³ and the novelist plays a double role, that of actor-manager, in providing the audience with actor and wall. His imagination encompasses the entirety of the stage.

Yet the book is not entirely comic: the failure of such aspirations in the hero of a late nineteenth century novel rarely is, and Jocelyn is no exception. In a letter to Pearl Craigie (John Oliver Hobbes) Hardy commented on his characterization of the Well-Beloved, 'though the view of her is in a measure a true one, practical people could hardly be supposed to enter into it, or

recognize the tragedy in the farce'.⁴ Tragedy is indeed present, and the book would be more accurately presented as a tragi-comedy. By deploying such a wry, ambivalent form, Hardy managed to protect himself from the moral outrage of hostile readers such as he had encountered over Tess and Jude. The technique also has its advantages within the novel, for by maintaining a certain distance from the protagonist's potentially tragic core, Hardy avails himself of the irony inherent in the presence of the confrontation between inner and outer. Jocelyn thus becomes a Pierrot figure, comically foolish and pitifully sad; and either impression of him imposes restraints on the other, in effect cancelling it out. It requires a surprisingly delicate touch to keep such a character poised between tragedy and farce, and at one point Hardy dramatizes his own difficulties. Jocelyn refused to speak of the effect of Avic's death on him because 'so volatile and intangible was the story that to convey it in words would have been as hard as to cage a perfume' (p.83). This 'story' is a mise en abyme, in effect the novel analogically. By couching it in tragi-comedy Hardy reduces the role of the observer-narrator, for the irony and releasing laughter that tragi-comedy engenders diminishes the importance of a voyeuristic narrator for the reader. More significantly, the observer-narrator is eclipsed by a more obsessional voyeur, Jocelyn, to whose point of view we are closer than almost any other character Hardy created. An example of this is the contrast between two metamorphoses: the daemonic grate and alien water-bottle in Tess, and the metamorphic dinner-table in Part Second chapter three of The Well-Beloved. The former describes things that Tess stares at, which have become symbolic of the gap between her and externality, as seen by the observer. In the latter incident we are with Jocelyn, and because of the fantastic nature of the metamorphosis (the water-bottle remains a water-bottle in the former description), share more intimately his shock and changing relationship with external things.

The focus of the narrative, then, is on a character who is partly created by the alternate sympathetic and ironic treatment of him by the narrator - an eminently Flaubertian device. But this way of creating character is largely pointless when dealing with a nostalgic selfhood such as Jocelyn's, for the centre of conflict in a nostalgic self lies not between the self and the world and others (as it does in Emma Bovary's situation) but between the self and self's own fantasies of its self and the world. Throughout the novel,

Jocelyn is consistently defeated not by the world but by the gap between his nostalgic fantasies of it, which he takes for reality, and his painfully acute awareness of the fantastic character of his life. This is the central conflict of the novel. But apart from a few memorable occasions - notably the metamorphosis of the dinner table above - the narrative is indifferent to this central conflict, and instead focusses on the distance between Jocelyn and the world. This distance is really irrelevant to Jocelyn's character, and is created for him by the exigencies of a simultaneously sympathetic and ironic narrative. Hardy's narrative strategy clashes with his main character creation; and in order to reconcile each to the other he would, as in the case of Proust writing A la recherche after the flawed narrative of Jean Santeuil, have had to have written a quite different narrative to embody his chosen model.

The sympathetic and ironical veiling form, then, has definite narratorial advantages, and I hope it is now clearer to see why Hardy adopted it. But it also has a quite deleterious side-effect on the reader, for it succeeds in inhibiting Hardy's serious analysis of the novel's nostalgic quest - an analysis that clashes with his narrative strategy. The Well-Beloved is an inferior novel in Hardy's oeuvre precisely because its form is not appropriate to its theme. It is an astonishingly simple error of tone in a novelist as mature as Hardy was when he came to write the book; but it becomes less surprising when one takes into account Hardy's deterministic view of the self. As was pointed out in chapter one, much of the power in Tess arises from the split narrator, who is both cause and consequence of the strictly determined model of selfhood that Hardy held. The dual narrator in Tess sets up an oscillation that knits the tone inextricably to the tale. In The Well-Beloved, though, the observer-narrator is confused with Jocelyn's voyeurism, and the narrative, despite its ironical attitude, loses much tension because of this. More crucially, Jocelyn's character assumes the traits of the observer-narrator, who above all else in Tess is responsible for the burden of a deterministic selfhood. To the observer-narrator in Tess, as to Jocelyn, the relentless pressure of actuality seems to blot out possibility while the present moves inevitably into actuality. Nostalgia is one course of escape from such a seemingly inexorable process, for it idealizes the past,

re-creates it in a more satisfying form that assuages, at least temporarily, the pain of the homeless selfhood. It can be seen then, that while the model of deterministic selfhood gave rise to the subject of The Well-Beloved - nostalgia - it also inhibits Hardy from treating the subject with the analytical subtlety it demands.

But if Hardy's art is inhibited here, Jocelyn's art thrives because he pursues Beauty nostalgically, and can transmute his nostalgic Ideal into 'durable shape'. The definitions of this nostalgic Ideal serve as the core of the book's treatment of the nostalgic self, and deserve closer attention. Its appearances take two forms. The first is the promiscuity which characterizes it before the death of the first Avic. It appears for a period of time in a woman and then, as mysteriously, vanishes to re-appear elsewhere. Its incarnation and existence is dependent on a delicate balance between approaching too near, and destroying its all-important aura of mystery through becoming too aware of the mask-figure, and withdrawing too far from its allure. Above all, propinquity makes it flee: when chasing after glimpses of beauty Jocelyn is usually disappointed at close quarters. And 'he knew that a ten-minutes' conversation in the wings with the substance would send the elusive haunter scurrying fearfully away into some other even less accessible mask-figure' (p.64). The balance that Hardy achieves between tragedy and farce is thus mirrored in Jocelyn's attitude towards the Well-Beloved; and this ambivalent, dual attitude points to the root of Jocelyn's nostalgic condition. To Jocelyn, attracting a woman's attention both begins and ends the 'relationship'. It encompasses and acts out his basic needs and most intense satisfactions. The two early passions which he describes to his painter friend set the mould for his relations in love. The contact is non-sexual, but follows the rhythm of the sexual act inexorably - arousal, coital penetration, assuaged desire. But, like the absence of the sexual act itself, the possession is spiritual: Jocelyn must penetrate the woman's attention, and the assuagement comes from watching himself give pleasure to the woman precisely as afterwards he watches himself being aware of time. The elusive presence, 'scurrying fearfully away', is not the woman but in fact Jocelyn who, in a reflection of Hardy's observer-narrator, retreats during and after penetration, and observes. What he desires, after all, is not the flesh and

blood Avice or the younger Marcia, but rather knowledge and control of her desire. This is achieved by immobilizing her selfhood in the coils of desire. By so penetrating another's attention, Jocelyn is given undeniable proof of his own unique existence. But he must make no settled plans to continue to love any woman, for this would destroy his future quest, and enjoyment of past fleeting encounters. Nostalgia's dual movement is the escapement of his character.

What puts an end to these initial appearances is the news of the death of the first Avice, which heralds the advent of the second form of the Ideal. At this point the narrative swerves from tragi-comedy and enters fantasy. 'By imperceptible and slow degrees' the London dining-room where Jocelyn is, dissolves into the Isle of Portland in a series of startling analogies, descriptive of the way Jocelyn's mind habitually wanders back into the past - 'the ivy trailing about the table-cloth, the lights in the tall candlesticks, and the bunches of flowers, were transmuted into the ivies of the cliff-built Castle, the tufts of seaweed, and the lighthouses on the isle' (p.81). Mrs Pine-Avon, the latest incarnation of the Well-Beloved 'seemed to grow material, a superficies of flesh and bone merely, a person of lines and surfaces; she was a language in living cipher no more'. The description of her is reminiscent of the water-bottle in Tess, and indeed, the same process is at work here, at a similar crisis-point. What is happening is that Jocelyn's projection of the Well-Beloved onto Mrs. Pine-Avon has ceased, just as, in reverse, the dining-room becomes something else, at the news of Avice's death. Furthermore - and this only becomes clear in retrospect - Jocelyn's own conception of the Well-Beloved is undergoing change, taking up permanent residence now in the myth of Avice. Metamorphosis all around him characterizes this turning-point in Jocelyn's life as it is emblematic of his curse - most fickle, yet strangely stable and inert in an otherwise changing world. The paradox arises from the contradictions inherent in the nostalgic self. Like Tithonus he seems doomed to everlasting youth as regards the powers of the imagination; but his body still decays. Yet if the external manifestation of Jocelyn's condition has shifted, its fundamental pattern remains the same: the self's fear of losing itself still

dominates, and the relationship between past and future needs continual reassurance through fantasy created out of, and projected onto, the past. The quest is a powerful literary trope for this condition; for it exemplifies the infinite regress, the continual dissatisfaction that stimulates Jocelyn's nostalgia.

The key to why the death of Avice should move him so powerfully is given after the transformation scene - 'the soul of Avice - the only woman he had never loved of those who had loved him - surrounded him like a firmament'(p.81). Previously, the Well-Beloved had thrived on distance; and now it flourishes on the greatest distance of all, that of death. Because the object is no longer in existence, it is now completely available: 'he loved the woman dead and inaccessible as he had never loved her in life'(p.83). The charm of other women for Jocelyn lay in the image of the Well-Beloved projected on them. The Well-Beloved is an incarnation of that which it seems impossible to know as sensory experience: the contents of one's own imagination. External reality is disappointing to him because it is different. Jocelyn suffers throughout his lonely life therefore, not because he rejects or is rejected by women he loves, but fundamentally because of the loved one's irrelevance to the lover's feeling. His responses to the world are merely responses to the self, portrayed as simultaneously comic and pathetic.

He exists, therefore, lonely and dissatisfied, 'floating in society without any soul-anchorage or shrine that he could call his own'(p.63). Lacking a sense of his own continuity in time and place, he seeks to fix a permanent image of himself in the external world. He does this by creating his own ontological myth of Avice - persuading himself that she 'possessed a ground-quality absent from her rivals, without which it seemed that a fixed and full-rounded constancy to a woman could not flourish in him'(p.84). This punning 'ground-quality' is none other than the racial characteristic of the islanders; and to this notion Jocelyn adds the more generally known tradition that the island was once sacred to Venus. As Jocelyn encounters the second and third Avices, the name becomes symbolic of an ideal aspect of that universality he longs for and can find nowhere around him in the particulars of either life or art.

This vicarious unity in his life is grounded in nostalgia for the first Avice. Just as in nostalgia the loved one is more a

vague embodiment of pursuit rather than a clearly outlined cause of love, so the nostalgic self - Jocelyn - will see patterns of similarity in his behaviour rather than the causes behind the patterns, and take these patterns for causes. And if there are no real causes revealed, merely patterns, then the pattern will appear pre-destined, and bound to repeat itself. Hence Jocelyn refers not to specific psychological reasons for his behaviour pattern, but to a general law of heredity which posits genetic continuity through generations. These mythic and hereditary patterns hold, of course, an appeal for Jocelyn, for they assure continuity between past and present that brings a relief more soothing to his weakened sense of selfhood than any narcissistic hope of infinite plasticity. But like the narcissist in lacking a sense of continuity, the nostalgic person seeks in the patina of memory projected onto things the presence of the self in the world. Thus the name Avice provides a continuity between past and present which the nostalgic self cannot find in the psychological history of his own self. The repetition of the name is symptomatic of Jocelyn's condition: Avice is habitually known without her surname, which is symbolic of what are for Jocelyn undesirable connections with the past and present, and which is a repository of her unique identity. Avice is anonymous, because she could have been Everywoman, had the first Avice been different. And just as she is hypostatized and anonymous, so Jocelyn's art is one of static images and figurines of her idealization, quarried and sculpted from the historical myth and real oolite of Portland. The island is unique among Hardy's landscapes in that it nears the status of an abstractly symbolic paysage, similar to A.E. Housman's Shropshire, and different only in its greater degree of particularization.

Yet, just as Tess wants to kill her situation more than Alec, so Jocelyn does not want to marry either of the latter two Avices: in fact, the idea of such sustained proximity to another never appealed to him, as the sea-bed image in chapter two - p.35 - indicates. His vivid love for the latter two Avices is compatible with an almost complete ignorance of them: indeed, his images of them are predictably absent from his desire to possess them, for what he desires to possess does not correspond to the living woman he pursues. The similarities among his infatuations make it appear

to him as if he had always been pursuing the same woman - the Well-Beloved. This is symptomatic of an obsession in Jocelyn, which manifests itself as a nostalgic desire for recollection: repetition from, and of, the past. What he wants is an end to his particular condition of alienation in the world - the plight of the artist-observer detached from the rest of society - and one way to achieve this, albeit temporarily, is to exist in nostalgic oscillation between past and present. Jocelyn is further isolated because he exists among appearances only - appropriate for a sculptor - and cannot attain to the unity of the world and self that would lend coherence to his life and art. His Absolute - the myth of Avice - is, in such pluralistic chaos, not an abstract principle but a consolation for, and a result of, his solipsistic and self-assertive quest.

Yet despite Jocelyn's refusal to learn from his experience of the quest, the novel does not end tragically. Tragedy is absent not because of Jocelyn's generosity and self-sacrifice; nor, certainly, because the plot demanded it. On the contrary, Jocelyn's quest is tragic. Tragedy is absent in the novel because it would have been inimical to the balanced irony of the narrative tone. Jocelyn's wish for release from his alienated condition - both cause and consequence of his nostalgia - is granted when he falls ill suddenly with a fever, after which he becomes aware of 'a singular change in himself' - 'the artistic sense had left him, and he could no longer attach a definite sentiment to images of beauty recalled from the past' (p.186). This illness and loss occurs as a deus ex machina in the novel. It does not spring from the plot but reads as if tacked on as an ending, in lieu of anything better. The source of this gaucherie is not hard to find. The balanced irony of the narrative could not permit genuine tragedy to intrude - this would have entailed the narrative solecism of changing the reader's entire view of Jocelyn's ambitions at the very end of the novel. Hardy's narrative, again, forces him to misrepresent the model of nostalgic selfhood that is his real subject.

With the disappearance of Jocelyn's aesthetic senses go, too, the haunting suspicions that the 'true' and the 'real' are hidden beyond appearances, somewhere in the outer world, and are not immanent in the interpretation of that world. The 'truth' about

his quest finally comes home to him, and he accepts that the Well-Beloved is what he had never previously accepted it to be, a 'subjective phenomenon' (p.34). But once again, Hardy misses the crux of the conflict. This resides not in any opposition of subjective and objective phenomena or art, but in the conflict between the nostalgic self's fantasies of its self and the world (set in the past), and its awareness of the fantastic nature of its existence (caught in the present).

The published novel's ending exhibits the same narrative mixture of the wry and wistful that has obtained throughout. Jocelyn marries his former fiancé, Marcia, in old age, and both find a measure of contentment with each other, now that the 'well-beloved is prisoner in the cell/Of Time no more'.⁵ Their time together might be contrasted to the time Angel and Tess spend together at the end of that novel. There, the reader is made overpoweringly aware of lost chances, the brevity of the time left to the lovers, their absorption in each other, and the immanence of death. In the book version of The Well-Beloved, however, there is no tragedy, lyrical or bitter. Jocelyn and Marcia are resigned to both their fates, and spend their time in the service of others - healing a lovers' quarrel, supporting sanitation schemes, and replacing 'old moss-grown, mullioned Elizabethan cottages', one of which may have been the 'quaint little Elizabethan cottage' belonging to the first Avic(p.112). No strong emotion is present or evoked: the ending is neither bitter nor lyrical, but one of gently ironic quiescence.

The ending, then, shares in the irony of the narrative towards Jocelyn; but just as the narrative form is unsuited to the book's theme, so this ending is an unsatisfactory ending to the nostalgic quest. Jocelyn is released magically from his cell of time. But Jocelyn's life-long quest has been no quest in the faery sense; and no matter how sweetly the meshing narrative cogs come to rest, Jocelyn's magical release still contradicts the logic of the nostalgic impulses that are the mainspring of his character. The serial version of the novel ends quite differently, with Jocelyn attempting suicide and in despair at the futility of his life. Such an ending is a more acceptable, though crueller, judgment of the aims of Jocelyn's quest; and its genuine tragedy contradicts

the balanced irony of the rest of the serial version of the novel. In the published book version, however, Hardy changed this, and instead of writing an ending that fitted the real centre of conflict in Jocelyn's nostalgic character, he re-wrote a conclusion that fitted the narrative's uniformity of balanced irony. The latter ending has little to do with the theme of nostalgia and all to do with a narrative form that, adopted for the best of reasons, only deflected the author's purpose.

And by re-writing the book's ending so, by deciding in favour of a narrative form that avoids the nostalgic model of selfhood, Hardy commits himself to a statement about what is an illusory view of the world, a statement which contains an uncharacteristically naive view of the springs of art in the artistic self. Once again, the type of narrative is the cause of this lack of resolution. The narrative errs by treating the conflict between reality and Jocelyn's unique apprehension of it as the novel's central conflict. Jocelyn, it implies, makes mistakes about reality because of his desire to control it; he suffers and is cured; but, like Sister Teresa, loses his artistic senses. The sources of Jocelyn's art would then appear to be morbid, literally a dis-ease within his life; with that which impels him to create also hindering him from creating great art. But, as said before, the central conflict is that of nostalgia within Jocelyn: between Jocelyn's desire for a nostalgic existence and his painful awareness of its emptiness - an oscillation that is bedded tightly in the deterministic model of the self. In circumventing this central conflict in Jocelyn's character, the narrative presents a simplistic account of artistic inspiration. It leads us to believe by its powerfully deterministic tone, that all art with morbidly obsessional inspiration such as Jocelyn's must fail, or at least be mediocre. Art grounded in nostalgia must inevitably turn out to be nostalgic, it implies, and therefore weak, because solipsistic and a flight from the world. That it need not at all be so was proven most famously by the example of Flaubert, who spent the last years of his life with - one might almost say within - his creation of a character eminently nostalgic and narcissistic. But in The Well-Beloved, because the narrative deals with the wrong conflict, the narrative's view appears the only correct view of Jocelyn's art. In treating Jocelyn's life and art,

therefore, the narrative form mars the novel's main subject, nostalgia; and it leaves many questions about the nature of artistic inspiration and its existential relation to selfhood unanswered - an issue which the third author dealt with in this chapter was to take up and spend most of his life answering.

ii. A Shropshire Lad: The Recollecting Self

It is a fact that Housman spent little time in Shropshire, and grew up in Worcestershire. He declared in a letter that 'I had a sentimental feeling for Shropshire because its hills were our western horizon. I know Ludlow and Wenlock, but my topographical details - Hughley, Abdon under Clee - are sometimes quite wrong. Remember that Tyrtæus was not a Spartan'.⁶ Of the personae in the poems he said, 'the Shropshire Lad is an imaginary figure, with something of my temper and view of life. Very little in the book is biographical'.⁷ Housman thus saw the volume's setting and personae as distinctly apart from the concerns of academic life in which he was immersed. It is all the more appropriate, therefore, that Housman's poetry should convey a sense of intimacy that cannot be traced to familiarity with either the region or its rural people. From this seeming contradiction Housman's verse draws much of its peculiar power, and whatever sense of existing selfhood that A Shropshire Lad conveys arises from it. The deep and often acrimonious division among critics concerning the true value of Housman's poetry can also be traced to this source.

The contradiction works on many levels: for example, the systole-diastole effect in the structure of the two-stanza poems - numbers XV, XVI, XL, LIV, LVIII. The rhetoric of the collection's first poem, '1887', sets the puzzling tone, in its ambiguous position between straightforward eulogy and ironical counter-statement:

Oh, God will save her, fear you not:
Be you the men you've been,
Get you the sons your fathers got,
And God will save the Queen.⁸

When Frank Harris wrote to congratulate Housman on this poem's 'splendid mockery', Housman replied that 'I never intended to poke

fun, as you call it, at patriotism... I meant it sincerely: if Englishmen breed as good men as their fathers, then God will save their Queen'.⁹ Now whatever Housman's taste in literature may have been, he possessed, like Pater, a remarkably acute ear for literary style. It is unlikely that he failed to realize how the poem may be interpreted in two entirely different ways - after all, such understated irony informs a number of the poems in A Shropshire Lad, notably XLIII and III - and his reply to Harris may have been prompted by irascible dislike of the man or his crude interpretation of the poem. It could be classified with Eliot's wry view of The Waste Land as 'just a piece of rhythmical grumbling', or Catullus's reference to his own verse as 'rubbish' (nugae).¹⁰ But however we may interpret his letter, the poem's tone remains - latently, at least - ambivalent.

Such ambivalent tension is the primary source of Housman's art in his best verse, a tension that exists not merely between attitude or persona or form, but within each of these. There is an irony which undercuts the naïveté of the Shropshire lad, replacing his communal events and rustic life with an intensely personal view of his existence, one more sentimental and removed from his broadly rural concerns. And despite Housman's list of Scottish border ballads, Shakespeare's songs and Heine as his models, the sources of attitudes within his verse lie not in these forms, but in the attitudes with which his uniquely modern pastoral is invested.¹¹ His poetry succeeds because of its shaping tension, and this tension arises both from his use of the pastoral form and a model of nostalgic selfhood. Before I examine in what sense Housman's verse may be called nostalgic, it is necessary to look to the poems's grounding in the pastoral mode, for the relation between pastoral and nostalgia needs careful definition.

The true extent to which Housman's verse may be called pastoral needs careful definition in itself. Not all of A Shropshire Lad or even the rest of his oeuvre can be called pastoral - see, for example, poems VIII, XVI, and XXVII, which are clearly modelled on the Scottish border ballad form. And the ambivalence that pervades '1887' characterizes his handling of the pastoral genre, so that his use of it needs to be distinguished from classical, Renaissance and even Romantic pastoral. In classical pastoral, for instance, no heavy regret is expressed for lost youth; but the Shropshire lad is always young and dies young, like Pater's imaginary anti-heroes (XIX). And even while they seem to be eternally young, they are acutely aware of their mortality, unlike Theocritean herdsmen (XXIII). Again, in pastoral genres, drink in excess is a motif of satyrs and

l'homme moyen sensuel; in Housman, 'strong liquor' is a temporary escape from 'trouble'. And the pagan finality of death, only touched on in ancient pastoral where the tone is more epicurean and hedonistic, is endemic in Housman, whose philosophy is much more stoic, but no less hedonistic for all that.

As a highly literate don in Classics, Housman would have been familiar with the changing models of the pastoral, and he knew that his task was not to convey nature in organic form, but to create an artificial beauty. Ancient pastoral poetry is composed of convention and artifice, and the poet is not a seer or prophet, but a self-conscious artifex. In adopting this artifice as a veil, Housman can afford to speak in protest and appeal against the straitening facts of social closure and the mortal condition of man. Such a use of form as a mask was certainly not unique to Housman. If A Shropshire Lad is a self-conscious imitation and exploitation of the pastoral mode, then Beardsley's Under the Hill is a self-conscious parody of pastoralism, which overtly mimics the doubling, reflective form that nostalgia creates for itself, and which Housman, as we shall see, silently appropriates to create the shaping tension in his verse.

It is important as regards the pastoral's attraction for Housman to note that writers of classical Greece did not contrast town and country to the advantage of the latter. Their attitude was that of Hesiod, or Xenophon in his Oikonomikos. The pastoral arose in Hellenistic Alexandria; not in a rustic region, nor in a neatly identifiable δῆμος καὶ πόλις, but in a sprawling megapolis, cosmopolitan and bewilderingly complex:

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many. ¹²

The pastoral as composed by Theokritus and his peers was not purely a flight from the pressures and concerns of this world, but an intensification of the desires and atavisms that lie beneath them. The search for money and wealth may be a search for security and simplicity; but even when attained, this goal creates further complexities. And the glamorous, lonely adventure of cosmopolitan life in London/Alexandria is often contrasted in pastoral poetry to the steady life, and calm friendship of the country -

In my own shire, if I was sad,
 Homely comforters I had:
 The earth, because my heart was sore,
 Sorrowed for the son she bore...
 But here in London streets I ken
 No such helpmates, only men;
 And these are not in plight to bear,
 If they would, another's care.
 They have enough as 'tis: I see
 In many an eye that measures me
 The mortal sickness of a mind
 Too unhappy to be kind. (XLI)

The gap between industrial London and Shropshire - one in which pain and suffering is not merely insinuated, as in Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House' (lls. 393-400), but dwelt on insistently - and that between the ancient city and countryside is of course wider; and on the whole Housman's poetry expresses a more sombre view of man's place in both city and country. Nevertheless, the original pastoral values attached to each locus are still upheld, and though Housman's poetry may be said to be broadly pastoral in its opposition of city and rustic values, the opposition is never as clear as in Theokritean pastoral. Thus, Shropshire includes towns like Ludlow (XXXVII, 1.33), and the countryside is never Edenic in its cornucopian plenty, but more georgic than pastoral, a world of sweat and labour (VII, XXIV). The so-called pathetic fallacy, so strong in Housman, was rarely if ever present in ancient pastoral. Yet Housman's loci amoeni are seldom centres which inspire or even evoke response from the persona, as in Wordsworth for example; rather they are projections of the state of mind of the persona. The landscape in fact is less a recognizable piece of England - as is Hardy's Wessex - than a generalized landscape of the mind, a paysage d'âme. Housman's personae inhabit a world that is as vague as Theokritus's Sicily or Cos, or Virgil's Arcadia; but their world is no Epicurean bower of bliss. Et in Arcadia ego: they too, long for Arcadia, whether it is in the pool's spatial reflections of reality or the mind's temporal recollections of a Golden Age beyond the inhabited world. Either may invoke nostalgia, but principally the latter.

Housman turned to the pastoral mode not because he found it congenial to adapt and change its particular set of conventions, but primarily because it provided him with a vehicle to express what he had to say about an important aspect of selfhood. It may seem curious to talk of a sense of selfhood arising out of what is essent-

ially a poetic form, but it is in fact so. As Renato Poggioli points out, pastoral may be enlarged to include a 'pastoral of the self';¹³ and at least one critic has indicated that there is an important parallel between early pastoral and the early Hellenistic philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism.¹⁴ Despite their gloomy, sometimes morbid overtones, Housman's pastoral poems are not a 'pastoral of melancholy', but a 'pastoral of the self'.¹⁵ The most important personage in the poems is not a created pastoral persona, Tityrus or Terence, but a Shropshire lad, speaking in the first person, alive or dead. His relation to the poet is a delicate one, dependent on each poem's tone. In 'Bredon Hill', for example, the poet is clearly at a distance from the dramatic tragedy; in XLIII, 'The Immortal Part', the speaker bases his words on an ironic inversion; in XXXI, the persona is matched exactly to the poet. Here again, Housman derives his model from the ancient pastoral models, Virgil and Theokritus, but goes beyond them and uses them for his own purposes. The Shropshire lad is even less of a realistic character than Lycidas because he is more amorphous than identifiable shepherds. The private concerns and private $\alpha\gamma\omega\upsilon$ of the lad are extended to become an overt metaphor for the collective lot of mankind: the lad is not a man, but Man. Yet the curious fact is that this collectivity is expressed not by metaphoric fusion throughout the poems but in terms of metonymic fission. Such division isolates the singularity and difference of occasions rather than seeking to discern in the merging of identity the proof of a higher synthesis of poetic meaning. The lad is never transcendentalized, but remains strikingly immanent, unlike the figure of Lucy in Wordsworth's poem, 'A slumber did my spirit seal'. An example of this is poem XX from Last Poems. One source of Housman's association of aspects of landscape and psychological traits is of course Wordsworth; but Housman goes beyond Wordsworth in this. Wordsworth makes the human figure seem to evolve out of, and revert back into, the landscape - the leech-gatherer in 'Resolution and Independence', for example, becoming a symbol of human endurance that alleviates the observer's 'trouble'. In Housman, the character of the Shropshire lad is not so much part of the landscape, as the landscape is a felt part of his experience.

Housman's poetry is Romantic in one important sense, however. Where pastoral verse, specifically ancient pastoral, is composed only in accretion and symmetrization, the Romantic lyric

seeks to concentrate the poem as a unique moment of truth and enlightenment. Through its combination of pastoral verse and Romantic lyric, Housman's verse contrives to be at once public and intensely private poetry.

The tension between public and private landscape and experience is demonstrated most clearly in the visual subtleties of poem XX of A Shropshire Lad. The motif of a reflected world wherein everything is clearer and brighter is neatly carried through with the pun on 'wash'; and the eighth line gives a hint of the true longing of the persona. But it is not until the twelfth line, and the word 'drown' that the motif takes on a deeper significance. The persona desires to enter this ideal world; and his wish is all the more mysterious because it seems to have no motive apart from itself. There is no tale of woe hinted at, and consequently the desire for this ideal world seems to be its own source and agency. The longing for death is the desire for an ideal world; the desire for an ideal world is a longing for death. Yet in this poem the 'lover of the grave' (XVI) is stopped by the sight of his alter ego, which dissolves the tension built up in the first three stanzas by reminding him of the impossibility of his longing, and the ridiculousness of his pose. The desire vanishes, and the water becomes not merely a mirror, but a translucent brook, wherein the persona can see golden sands. The ambiguity here is pointed up by Roland Barthes in Mythologies, where at one point he writes:

if I am in a car and I look at the scenery through the window, I can at will focus on the scenery or on the window-pane. At one moment I grasp the presence of the glass and the distance of the landscape; at another, on the contrary, the transparency of the glass and the depth of the landscape; but the result of this alternation is constant: the glass is at once present and empty to me, and the landscape unreal and full.¹⁶

In his book L'erreur de Narcisse, Louis Lavelle refers this state of mind to the figure of Narcissus. To Narcissus, the mirror - too obviously a reflecting object - would have been "une barrière à ses entreprises" in its hard, one-dimensional exactitude.¹⁷ In a pool, however, both mirror and part of nature, the reflection, 'un peu vague, un peu pâli, suggère une idéalisation', whereupon 'L'eau sert à naturaliser notre image'; and in thus naturalizing,

extends Narcissus's self to all externality around him, both in the mirror and in nature.¹⁸ Nature becomes the mirror and the object; and it is only his awareness of the sandy bottom that interrupts the gradual metamorphosis of the persona into nature, and brings him to a realization of the pool's catoptronic spell. And simultaneous with this awareness, the persona comes to realize that what he seeks is really himself.

This poem, however, is an exception to the rest of the volume in that the persona is freed from his desire at the poem's end. Much more often in A Shropshire Lad the desired object is distant primarily in time, and the persona remains prisoned by his desire. This is an important point for it constitutes the typical nostalgic manoeuvre: the poet, stalemated in his present, projects his wishes and fears into art where personae, stalemated in their present, project their wishes and fears into a longing for a Golden Age where a perfect reality and perfect justice flourish in harmony. Yet this Golden Age so longed for is not portrayed in any detail as one might expect of the object of desire. It is not a utopia, nor an Urbs Beata, but, as above, an idealized reflection of the present. It is distant not in space, but time.

In Housman's poems this nostalgia leads to the things or situation described seeming everywhere to point beyond the rural world. One is given the sense of a depth of reference that often emanates from the effect of powerful symbolism; yet when one attempts to pinpoint the source of this impression, its meaning proves too elusive for definition on this level. This arises partly because in Housman's verse his images seem to reverberate beyond the traditional limits to the references, nor are they shaped in a metaphorical technique.

This technique in Housman's poems stems from pastoral practice, where metaphor - the establishing of identity between at least two diverse things or ideas - is far less common than analogical form. If indeed Shropshire is a stylized region, in essence symbolic of a reality, a plan of existence rather than a recognizable area, Helpston or Wessex, then what is being compared is not Shropshire and life within and without it but existence within the poem to existence outside it in the reader's experience. The comparison creates a division which itself creates an awareness of the correspondences between the two realms. Things and situations are therefore not invested with specific symbolic content since the contrast inherent in this oscillation brings out their universal

aspect. Housman's most successful poems thereby avoid the danger of flat allegory, and do not restrict their symbolism to specific levels of reference. A poem like XL may openly state its allegorical form, but this by no means exhausts its attraction, for the poetic power resides precisely in the fact that the poem does not point to any particular thing in other contexts, but represents whole classes of experience. Looking for a definitive 'message', the reader will be disappointed. Housman's verse does not present an overt statement of ideas; nor does it embody the Imagist values of concreteness, distinctness and particularity. What the verse 'says' is conveyed by the resonance between the poem's images and tone and the reader's experience of life and self. The device is curiously Symbolist, for the symbol evades exactitude of reference, working rather on a more subliminal level of implication and oblique analogy; and a comparison between the closed experiential structure of the poem and the open field of the reader's experience is always strongly implied.

Thus, in poem II, the flowering cherry tree provides the poem's central image, and the lyric's light-hearted tone and the naive arithmetic of the second stanza belies the poem's darker theme. This is hinted at in the change in repetition of the key-words: from the cherry being described as 'hung with bloom' and wearing 'white for Eastertide', it is described in the third stanza as 'hung with snow'. The implications in the occurrence of 'hung' and 'Eastertide' are made more clear by comparing the cherry blossoms with snow, harbinger of winter and death, both that of the tree and the speaker.

Repetition is in fact a major device which Housman adapted from pastoral convention. It is a valuable device in poetry that relies on the tension of analogical form. In pastoral verse proper, it increases the feeling that 'all new starts are also variations upon the theme voiced at the outset. Thus the mechanics of the poem contribute to the sense of standing still'.¹⁹ Repetition is the basis of Housman's analogical form; but it also assumes epistemological overtones. A poem is an event, unlike a picture or sculpture: it exists primarily in time, in the reader's or listener's time. Within this forward movement are the internal movements of the poem. In poem II, for example, the first stanza deals with the immediate present. In the second stanza the persona ranges back and forward, remembering and anticipating, while the third stanza ends with an

anticipation of the future. The movement of the poem is generally a sequential one, from present to future, yet the poem is curiously static, remaining firmly in the present. The coordination of stasis and process, stillness and change (present, as we have seen, in the poem's central image of the Eastertide tree hung with snow) is a kinaesthetic position which is felt as both anticipation (of seeing the tree) and recollection (of his mortal span). The poem releases its energy in the backwards-forwards movement of which it is composed, and which the reader re-enacts when he reads the poem as a remembered sequence of stanzas, lines, images.

It is repetition that is the source of the creative tension in Housman's best poems, but it is a repetition based on recollection and nostalgia, and this, ultimately, has a detrimental effect on Housman's poetry. It is this repetition and its nostalgic source that I shall now examine. In poem II the image that prompts the creative repetition is not the real centre of tension: this centre is really the speaker's awareness of his own mortality, an awareness which per se gives rise to an overpowering nostalgia for what will be finally lost to him. By means of this longing the speaker removes himself from the present to a stance in a vicarious eternity. This can be seen at its clearest in poem XL, a complex lyric which, like all of the best lyrics in A Shropshire Lad, disguises the complex effect it has on the reader.

Into my heart an air that kills
 From yon far country blows:
 What are those blue remembered hills,
 What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
 I see it shining plain,
 The happy highways where I went
 And cannot come again.

The 'land of lost content' only exists as a separate land where the speaker cannot travel because it is lost. Now that it is lost, he is acutely conscious of the distance separating him from it, and its detached quality. The real landscape is what it always was, and only he seems to have changed - a viewpoint which causes him to fall back upon memory and lends irony to the question 'What spires, what farms are those?' The question then has two meanings: the conventional one

of asking for the name of the places, and the more unusual one of asking what these things are in essence. The latter meaning is realized only in retrospect, when it becomes clear from the fifth line that the hills and spires and farms have an ambiguous ontological status, at once recognisably solid farms, but farms which have only a mental existence now in the mind of the persona for whom they are lost. The poem re-enacts this loss in the reader's mind by treating the landscape at first as the true referent of the words (only 'remembered' gives hint of the change) and not the sense of loss which it symbolizes.

The sense of loss itself is dependent on a particular type of remembering. When we are looking at things in a room that we know very well, for example, it is sometimes possible by an effort of the imagination to see them suddenly in a very remote and seemingly objective light. As pointed out in chapter two, this may be put to good use in metaphoric techniques, where vision and memory are deliberately re-arranged. It involves a forgetfulness similar to that of Nesta Radnor, whose forgetting makes possible a rare openness to the world. But metaphor is hardly present in Housman's verse, and its place is taken by analogy. With analogy it is easier to do away with the first term of the device, to substitute another image for the object-image that the self would normally retain and which is now forgotten, one that mirrors the self's desire.

Yet what prevents the poem registering merely as a static statement of longing is the to-fro movement of the mind's eye from the spatial/temporal prospect of the 'blue remembered hills' to the foreground of the nostalgic desire; from distance to detail (country to hills to spires to farms); from question to answer; from abstract nostalgia to concrete paysage. The effect is to draw the reader's eye to the horizon and bring it back to the foreground of present nostalgia, which then becomes the real subject of the poem, and not something to be looked through as we look towards the distance. It is this to-fro movement - present also in the quotation from Barthes, above - which enables the reader to become aware of the composition of the poem; but his awareness of the composition changes his experience of it, and the planes and objects within it which function as a projection of the poet's nostalgia. The horizon is at once climax and

starting-point of the composition. The first line in fact gives warning of such a movement, with the juxtaposition of the word 'air' to 'kills', thereby transforming in retrospect the graceful, ethereal 'air' into a noxious vapour, which thus defines the poet's self-conscious, ambivalent attitude to his nostalgia. This is strengthened by the tension that springs from the words 'went' and 'come' in the second stanza. Housman avoided a verb of motion such as 'travel' or 'walk', which would be usual though a little clumsy in this context, and retained the present tense 'come', with a jarring, discordant effect. The speaker used to come and go repeatedly between this land and that; but now he is imprisoned in the bleak present and so he travels mentally, in his nostalgia, a journey more satisfying because the world he sets out to encounter is first of all in his own mind, and its existence outside his mind cannot extend beyond his words - or, in Housman's case, his decisions as a writer. However much content has been lost in the formal words, reality is now bearable because by re-creating or repeating it from the perspective of memory, he has made of it 'une antériorité dont ne peut plus venir aucune agression, aucune surprise'.²⁰ Housman, or his persona, thus returns to the world by cutting himself off from it; the questions he asks about things and other people's lives ('Is my team ploughing,/That I was used to drive') can be confidently answered because he creates the objects and their lives by asking his questions ('No change though you lie under/The land you used to plough' - poem XXVII).

This nostalgic circularity of theme and style, brought about by simultaneous distance and proximity, is one answer to the double loss of content. It is one answer to the selfless condition that Kurtz and Victor feel threatening them; that Jocelyn tries to embody in his dis-contented art. Despite the lament of the persona in Housman's poetry that he is far from that land, he experiences it in a static memory. The lyric feigns closure at its end, but it remains incomplete, for in nostalgia any consummation of desire is merely one stage in the circle of fear or Angst and assuagement. Consummation therefore leads to expectation, and the poem ends where it began. This strikingly static pattern is one upon which nearly all the poems of Housman's oeuvre are based. Its movement is

never one of transcendence but of immanence. Where Lucy in Wordsworth's poem becomes mystically one with 'rocks and stones and trees'; where Hardy's Drummer Hodge has 'strange-eyed constellations reign/His stars eternally', Housman's Dick makes 'His overcoat for ever,/And wears the turning globe', and the speaker of 'Astronomy' (Last Poems, XVII) remains with the dead soldier, 'where he/Is buried with the pole'. Because the lyric is retrospective, it starts at the end rather than the beginning of the poem's subject. Starting with loss, it has nothing to lose. It looks backward, in what appears to be a longing to return. But the retrospective self does not wish to return, only to repeat; and what it wishes to repeat is not a reality but a projection of the desire within itself. As with Jocelyn and his myth of Avice, what gives the projection its glamour is not what it once was or is now, but its relation to the nostalgic self. Such a self never desires the reality of its desire, but the desire itself, the perpetual retrospective repetition of a past that cannot be repeated. In this feeling (analytic thought is anathema to it - see poem XLIX, which is only half ironical) the self can safely allow itself to assume that the effect may be found in the cause; and to sense that if it could return to its beginning it could clarify and ease the troubling present, assuage future trouble. But such a closure of experience denies the forward movement of time and change, the need for indeterminacy presently acting upon the self's identity. Instead of repeating what had become as perpetually evolving into a becoming, the nostalgic self recollects becoming not merely as it was to it then, but as it was to it now. It refuses to acknowledge that within changing time the identity of the self is ceaselessly emerging, and therefore composed of more than the sum of its memories; and that it continuously modifies present identity by predicting what it will be in the future.

In Housman's verse, recollection is a nostalgic anamnesis, where the inherent eternal essence which one may come to know through remembrance, is none other than the desire for recollection. Its true end is clearly indicated in the solipsism of More Poems, XXVI. Furthermore, this desire becomes for the nostalgic self a wholly vicarious Archimedean point outside of the flux of time and change, wherein the self may recognize its self. This position is projected in poem after poem as a longing

for, and dread of, the true eternity beyond death. For nostalgia cannot transcend its own prison of time. It exists as irresolution, and exhibits the same to-and-fro tension that is present in the structure of most of A Shropshire Lad. Housman's persona becomes a ΠΕΛΟΠΟΝΝΗΣΙΟΣ in his insistence on the escape from existential repetition into the stasis and perpetual recurrence of death -

In the nation that is not
Nothing stands that stood before;
There revenges are forgot,
And the hater hates no more;

Lovers lying two and two
Ask not whom they sleep beside,
And the bridegroom all night through
Never turns him to the bride. (XII)

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose. (XIX)

But I like them shall win my way
Lastly to the bed of mould
Where there's neither heat nor cold. (XXX)

Turn safe to rest, no dreams, no waking; (XLIV)

Oh why did I awake? when shall I sleep again? (XLVIII)

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade. (LIV)

What is desired and dreaded here is not the possibility of existence in freedom, but nostalgic desire itself. The poems move us powerfully because they are created out of this dilemma on the part of Housman, who makes expert use of the nostalgic oscillating form.

What I have examined so far is the effect that the model of nostalgic self has within the structures of the poems. Its basic form, that of a repeated oscillation, lends considerable power to the poems, and I think it is clear that Housman was to some extent aware of his model, embedded as it was in persona and tone, and the effect it had when used in this particular lyric form. The successful poems in A Shropshire Lad succeed because Housman writes out of a model of nostalgic selfhood, and does so with some awareness of the ways in which this selfhood may be mediated by a literary form.

Yet praise of the poems's achievements must be qualified by suspicion. If Housman had sufficiently understood his model of selfhood he would have been able to write beyond it, to have written poetry that dealt in a sustained manner with other concerns. But even as a lyric poet, his field is narrow, limited to the concerns exhibited by A Shropshire Lad. It is always dangerous to associate persona and author, but when the poetic concerns are recurrent and little else intrudes, then it is fair to say that the author is implied by the persona and his concerns to a greater extent than is normally the case. This is indeed what happens with Housman: one is aware of a distinctive tone of voice in his poems, one which appears in no other poet's canon with such regular intensity. Because of this, and because one cannot feel the steady undertow of irony that pervades, for instance, The Well-Beloved towards its own form, it could be said that Housman as author was too implicated in the nostalgic concerns of his persona in the poems.

To what extent is difficult to determine, but that this does happen has important consequences for the poems. The oscillating form recurs too often for Housman to be unaware of its peculiar aptness to his subject. To this extent, he was aware that he was dealing with the problems and attitudes of a nostalgic self. Yet whether he sufficiently understood the model of nostalgic self is doubtful, for he never managed to write beyond it, and it is not possible to write confidently beyond a model of selfhood until one has understood that model's formal limitations. Every boundary is also a new beginning. Housman was trapped in the irresolution of his verse's main device - the to-from tension that creates his best poetry, and imprisons him as a poet.

That Housman did not sufficiently understand the formal implications of his model of nostalgic selfhood is evident from his theory of poetry outlined in poem LXII, upon which much in his famous lecture, 'The Name and Nature of Poetry' depends. The theory contains what one critic has aptly termed the 'mithridatic principle' - namely, that the repetition in art of small painful experiences may assuage their larger effects in life:²¹

Out of a stem that scored the hand
 I wrung it in a weary land.
 But take it: if the smack is sour,
 The better for the embittered hour;
 It should do good to heart and head
 When your soul is in my soul's stead.

Such a theory of art's function is close to Freud's theory of traumatic neuroses, "by which tragedy is used as the homeopathic administration of pain to inure ourselves to the greater pain which life will force upon us".²² Housman's theory which advocates a repetition of pain as an escape from pain, may seem distant from the pursuit of nostalgia. The bulk of A Shropshire Lad to which poem LXII refers, however, belies the theory contained in that poem. The tone of Housman's verse is not cathartic, but nostalgic, and one of defense against trouble through fantasy. As we have seen, the movement of most of the poems in the volume is one of repetition through recollection. This to-and-fro movement is stimulated by the desire for the memory of past joy and pain which assuages the bitter present, not the pain or joy itself: the placebo is different in quality, not quantity. In his discussion of what he termed the repetition compulsion, Freud concluded that 'the compulsion to repeat is the patient's way of remembering, and ... as such can be utilized in the therapeutic process. The repetition becomes a kind of existential recollection'.²³ Similarly, the nostalgic oscillation is the way that the persona remembers. For him it is *ἀπαιτεῖται* not *καθίκεται*. Yet - and this must be clearly stressed - despite this, the verse itself is not in need of therapy: the poems are well constructed, powerful lyrics for the most part, not requiring the overt sympathy of a nostalgic reader. And if the poems are not in need of therapy, neither are the best ones therapy. The 'mithridatic principle' is indeed largely irrelevant to Housman's achievement in A Shropshire Lad, despite what the poet himself says in poems XXIV and LXII: 'And I will friend you, if I may/In the dark and cloudy day'. When the poetry tries to be therapy, in fact, its value as poetry fails - for instance, the irony of poem LX is clumsy, the symbolism obvious, and the fruitful tension which characterizes Housman's best lyrics is absent.

The last poem of the volume (which typically evokes Virgil's concluding tenth eclogue), epitomizes the oscillating device described

above, and is significant of the whole volume. The speaker projects himself into the future, 'a dead man out of mind', and from this vantage point outside of time then imagines fresh generations of 'luckless lads' wearing the flowers sown by himself. The movement of the poem will be clear by now. The speaker longs across the greatest distance of all; but the poem is orientated towards the future - the oscillation is thus preserved. But his flowers, springing from the mould of nostalgia, are not balm to the brow of 'luckless lads'. If they were, and if they were read for this purpose, they would be bad poetry. As I have argued, they are simply beautiful flowers, sown and tended with only partial knowledge of what makes them beautiful. Housman mistakes the function of his poetry because he does not sufficiently understand his model of nostalgic selfhood, and the extent to which it alters purely formal aims. As a result, his poetry remains limited, its concerns narrow. Its flowers are random and wild. In another and significant context Philostratus the Elder points out the important distinction: 'on wild trees the flowers are fragrant; on cultivated trees, the fruits'.²⁴

iii. Ideas of Good and Evil: The Mythic Self

Yeats's famous re-castings of his self did not start with A Vision or even Per Amica Silentia Lunae, but in the late nineteenth century, when he first began to be aware of the special relationship obtaining between an artist's self and his art, and his view of both. His awareness of this is shown in a letter to Katharine Tynan where he proposed self-conscious Irishness - 'by being Irish as you can, you will be more original and true to yourself and in the long run more interesting, even to English readers'.²⁵ At this point, however, there was a dangerous confusion in Yeats's mind between 'being Irish' and being 'true to yourself' - a confusion that arose, as we shall see, from the model of nostalgic selfhood present in his criticism of art and society. Yeats himself was aware of the model and its dangers, and in the volume of essays entitled Ideas of Good and Evil he begins to trace his journey from a nostalgic sense of selfhood to a view of the self as a self-created

and historical model.

Now Yeats's early criticism has been as unpopular with critics generally as his early poetry. This volume in particular would appear to be a miscellaneous collection of reviews and short essays, some of them more idiosyncratic than others, and all of them slightly at variance with what they state is their critical object. While nursing the suspicion that these essays are unified by Yeats's anxiety to pay off the fifty pounds of an advance on his uncompleted novel, The Speckled Bird (lent to him by Lawrence Bullen), it is yet possible to see the book as a deliberate attempt to demonstrate the unities and changes of interests that had occurred between 1895 and 1903. Foremost amongst these interests and most representative of them, is the concept of myth that Yeats adopted. Yeats's absorption in myth was life-long; it deeply influences his aesthetics; it bound together the disparate spheres of nationalism, Symbolism and literature; and it is through his ideas on myth that the evolution of Yeats's sense of self may be most clearly understood. It is these ideas we shall now examine.

Yeats's early interest in myth and folk-lore is evinced by reports gathered under the title of The Celtic Twilight (1893). By 1897, however, and the publication of The Secret Rose, The Stories of Red Hanrahan, and Rosa Alchemica, Yeats's interest had become more speculative and more specifically anthropological. Unlike most of his literary acquaintances in the Celtic movement, he read the comparative studies of myth, religion and magic written by Windisch, Frazer, Rhys and Jubainville.²⁶ These writers convinced him, almost as much as the tales themselves, that myth was of vital importance to art. His main criticism of Blake is grounded in the conviction that no 'traditional mythology stood on the threshold of his meaning': 'had he been a Catholic of Dante's time he would have been well content with Mary and the angels; or had he been a scholar of our time he would have taken his symbols where Wagner took his, from Norse mythology'.²⁷ The influence of comparative mythography is evident here in the citing of analogous systems of belief. At a deeper level, however, such studies brought Yeats to a realization that there was an underlying story which manifested itself in these myths and without which it could not be told. This gave credence to the view that whatever the human mind had once believed must always

retain some intrinsic value and significance. If Blake, therefore, 'spoke confusedly and obscurely it was because he spoke things for whose speaking he could find no models in the world about him' (p.168). This view of the problems Blake faced is analogous to Wilde's statement above (p.4) that 'in a strange twilight man is seeking for himself, and when he has found his own image, he cannot understand it'.

For Yeats, then, a myth was a model, a narrative defining an eternal sacred reality in terms of observable phenomena. Such a view of myth was not unusual in late nineteenth century art. The form of contemporary mythographical inquiry, a complex mass of evidence attached to a relatively simple formulation (so unlike the elaborate formulations and simple materials of structuralist anthropology), encouraged this. It was given widespread cultural and philosophical viability by Goethe's recognition that myths must be created to replace vitiated religious imagery; by Schopenhauer's and Bradley's differing admissions of the impossibility of apprehending the Absolute by purely rational means; by Wagner's propaganda for the aesthetic relevance of myths from past societies; by Gauguin's anarchic primitivism. The ramifications of the view of myth as a sacred story were profound; and what is interesting is that Yeats, while hammering his thoughts into unity, combined myth with two other interests, Irish nationalism and the Symbolist aesthetic. It is in these fusions that Yeats's changing view of selfhood may be observed.

His linking of myth and national literature is indicative of Yeats's aims. Those essays in Ideas of Good and Evil which deal with Ireland show Yeats as speaking a myth not merely in the context of sacred, eternal verities, but as part of a contrast between the living mythic roots of Irish peasant society, and the secular, desacrilized urban society of England. He defined the relation between nationality and art when he addressed those 'convinced, as I was convinced, that art is tribeless, nationless, a blossom gathered in No Man's Land. The Greeks ... looked within their borders, and we, like them, have a history fuller than any modern history of imaginative events' (p.324). Myth is not merely to be collected and stored in publications like the Folk-lore Journal, but is, Yeats insisted, a living tradition which, if the Irish ignore it,

will only impoverish the productions of Irish art -

I would have Ireland recreate the ancient arts, the arts as they were understood in Judaea, in India, in Scandinavia, in Greece and Rome, in every ancient land; as they were understood when they moved a whole people and not a few people who have grown up in a leisured class and made this understanding their business. (p.325)

Yeats revealed his awareness of myth as the communicative stock-pile in terms of which a society's being is conceived when, defending his collection Irish Fairy and Folk-Tales against accusations of anti-scientific bias, he declared

the man of science is too often a person who has exchanged his soul for a formula; and when he captures a folk-tale, nothing remains for him for all his trouble but a wretched lifeless thing with the down rubbed off and a pin thrust through its once all-living body. I object to 'the honest folk-lorist', not because his versions are²⁸ accurate, but because they are inaccurate, or rather incomplete.

They are incomplete because 'written out in newspaper English and called science' - that is, separated from the living environment of which they are an organic part. Their formal aura, the very act of telling, is an integral part of them; and Alfred Nutt's rejoinder to Yeats's letter quoted above - that 'it is hardly fair to compare the Transactions of a learned society ... with a volume intended for the public at large' - completely misses Yeats's point.²⁹

Yeats did not despise rigorous study of myth, as his edition of Blake proves. But he saw through the pretensions of antiquarianism masquerading as a science in its false objectivity - for him, myth operated on a meta-level: 'there is still in truth upon these great level plains a people, a community bound together by imaginative possessions, by stories and poems which have grown out of its own life, and by a past of great passions which can still waken the heart to imaginative action' (p.337).

Myth belongs within society because inextricably its 'text': and can only be removed from the loom intact by the weaver in art who, also part of that society, will raise the significance of myth from the local to the universal through his art - 'I cannot but believe that if our painters of Highland cattle and moss-covered barns were to care enough for their country to care for what makes it different from other countries, they would discover, when struggling, it may be, to paint the exact grey of the bare Burren Hills, and of

a sudden, it may be, a new style, their very selves' (p.330). The movement here is revealing: 'from ΤΕΧΝΗ back to ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ'.³⁰ The artist will discover his self, like his style, in his subject. Yeats clearly envisages this self as an entity, because the myth in which the writer will find his self is a thing, an 'all-living body', an 'imaginative possession'. However Yeats may have treated myth as organic and dynamic when within society, he saw it as a static object in art, one in which content as well as the original irrecoverable aura of its form, was recoverable through poetic reconstruction. In society where it is a living tradition, especially a pre-literate society, myth is history, and contains the complexity of human acts and structures, where 'content' is actually relationship mistakenly substantized by those who calculate 'the thoughts that can be weighed, the knowledge that can be got from books, the precision that can be learned at school' (p.338). As a function of art for Yeats, however, myth turns history into nature, abrogating the 'fury and the mire of human veins', and turning this to the false simplicity of essences that masquerade as archetypes. In the process, myth not only naturalizes history, but does so with an inevitably false view of nature. For nature itself, as Yeats's contemporaries knew only too well, is not an eternal essence, but an historical existence, a complex, evolving interpretation of our environment. In his poetry and prose, Yeats attempted to reconstruct the myths of a Celtic past and present in the terms of a bygone concept of nature, siting the artefact in a time when men 'worshipped nature and the abundance of nature', and 'had imaginative passions because they did not live within our own strait limits, and were nearer to ancient chaos, every man's desire, and had immortal models about them' (pp.279-80). Behind such an attempt lies manifest nostalgic yearning; and Yeats's nostalgia for a timeless, mythic realm is concentrated in great static figures - 'and so it is that all the august sorrowful persons of literature, Cassandra and Helen and Deirdre, and Lear and Tristan, have come out of legends and are indeed but the images of the primitive imagination mirrored in the little looking-glass of the modern and classic imagination' (p.286).

Because an artist will find his self in his art, and because Yeats is dealing in Ideas with myth in art, it is inevitable that he deals with a model of nostalgic selfhood in his book. For

Yeats looks back with longing to the mythical time when art and society were one, when society's concerns were not only the concern of art, but when they were eminently appropriate matter for art. Now Yeats is careful here to avoid saying how much of any late nineteenth century writer's treatment of these myths belongs to the late nineteenth century, and what proportion to the myth itself, for this historical analysis would disturb the nostalgic view of myth in art. His disparagement of the modern - naturalistic - imagination as a 'little looking-glass' relieves him of this analysis, and conceals the extent to which myth becomes a purely private vehicle for lyric, not epic, scenaria. Now, such 'immortal models' do not belong to the living relation that Yeats, anticipating aspects of Lévi-Strauss, saw operating between society and myth (a relation only communicably experienced as process, as Yeats points out above), but to 'a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, [in] a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves'.³¹ This world can only be described nostalgically, for it is always retrospective and hence delighting in 'wild and beautiful lamentation' (p.286).

The isolated grandeur of the figures contribute to their sense of remote past, but Yeats also had definite aesthetic reasons for this procedure - 'if you liberate a person or a landscape from the bonds of motives and their actions, causes and their effects, and from all bonds but the bonds of your love, it will change under your eyes, and become a symbol of an infinite emotion... a part of the Divine Essence' (p.231).

No account of Yeats's early involvement with myth would be complete without taking into account the relation in his aesthetic between myth and symbolism. It is important at the outset to realize that, as one critic has it, 'Symbolism was not French; it happened in Paris'.³² It was part of the general European revolt, as Yeats saw it, against rationalism. It offered a non-logical approach to understanding and a means of restoring the values of introspection to a central place in the creative process; one which allowed for freer interpretation on the part of the reader by transforming the automatic relationship between word and referent to a luminous metonymic haze, 'in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols' (p.247). The evocativeness of this technique allowed

the mind to move on an indefinite, intangible plane where subconscious responses came into play long before the work was apprehended logically. The aesthetics of symbolism, however, left Yeats's art and criticism dangerously open to the seductions of nostalgia, and the creation of a world such as the one described above.

This world is most evident in the style of the criticism and in the poetry Yeats wrote before the turn of the century. A poem such as 'Who Goes With Fergus?' consists of questions, commands and assertions, yet the overall effect is muted, a paradoxical mixture of surface simplicity and mystery. As with most Symbolist writing, the effect of the poem is greater than the occasion and the accumulation of details would seem to warrant. The questions, for instance, are not true questions, nor are they merely rhetorical: they are not true questions in that they do not seek information (nor are they answered), and they are not rhetorical in that the answer to them is not contained or implicit in the question. Their function is connected to their temporality. Real questions imply a future in their very asking: Yeats's questions in this poem have no future because they are not answered with information which refers directly to the past, and appear irrelevant to the mood of asking. The result is a curious sense of hesitant absence: questions are not answered with un-answers, and commands do not command. The movement is significantly similar to the nostalgic form of Housman's poem, XL.

The non-question is a noticeable device in the prose of Ideas, but more striking and more frequent in the volume is the statement that does not function as a statement.³³ A simple statement, unlike a question or command states positively: it says something. In doing so, the reader attends not to the form of the utterance principally, but to its meaning for him. It is a function of Yeats's statements, however, to obscure this clarity of meaning in order to create the luminous metonymic haze. He does so by creating a trailing sentence, which deflects the reader's natural impulse to look for one centre of meaning in the sentence by diverting it to several such centres.

[Morris's] art was not more essentially religious than Rossetti's art, but it was different, for Rossetti, drunken with natural beauty, saw the supernatural beauty, the impossible beauty, in his frenzy, while he being less intense and more tranquil would show us a beauty that would wither if it did not set us at peace with natural things, and if we did not believe that it existed always a little, and would some day exist in its fulness. (p.89)

The oppositions in this sentence are not set out neatly for the reader's quick eye: 'not more... but... for... while he being... would... if... and if...'. The syntactical movement is tortuous, elliptical, exhibiting a to-fro tension that dissipates linear meaning. This non-statement can also drift -

Nor I think has any one, who has known that experience with any constancy, failed to find some day in some old book or on some old monument, a strange or intricate image, that had floated up before him, and grown perhaps dizzy with the sudden conviction that our little memories are but a part of some great memory that renews the world and men's thoughts age after age, and that our thoughts are not, as we suppose, the deep but a little foam upon the deep. (p.113)

Here the apparent drift of the sentence, impossible to hold in one's mind through a single reading of it, is a kind of set piece of impressionistic writing. We are more aware of the speaker's decision to disorient us by the evasive length of sentence combined with uneasy juxtaposition of tenses. Furthermore, the first person plural does not seem to have much to do with the reader: 'we' and 'our' appear much more as self-musings on the part of Yeats than a projection of our experience. Frequently this stylistic habit is less apparent than in the above quotation. It is so generalized throughout the volume that all the startlingly disparate subjects of the essays - psalteries, magic, Galway plains, William Blake - appear as natural subjects for literary criticism because Yeats directs our attention not at the subjects, but at his complex responses to them. There is, then, a coherent expression of thought and feeling in the essays which owes its existence largely to the strong presence of Yeats's own voice as this is represented in the prose. But it is criticism without its initial impetus. Places, people and texts - these initiatory moments all become metaphors for Yeats's particular perspective on reality and the problems of selfhood. Thus do the dramatic tensions of Yeats's sentence structures repeat stylistically the aims of the Symbolist aesthetic outlined above.

The same device is used on a larger scale in the structure of Yeats's essays in Ideas. In 'At Stratford-on-Avon' for example, the true subject of the essay is not the contrast of Stratford to London; nor Yeats's quarrel with Shakespearian criticism; nor the antinomy of Richard II and Henry V, but the nature of illusion, and specifically stage-illusion. Taking as his text Goethe's maxim that

"Art is art, because it is not nature", Yeats posits a stage stripped of all mimetic and naturalistic scenery, a strikingly Symbolist setting (p.152). Shakespeare, in fact, like Blake and to an extent Shelley, becomes a Symbolist poet - it is 'an essential part of his method to give slight or obscure motives of many actions that our attention may dwell on what is of chief importance, and we set these cloudy actions among solid-looking houses, and what we hope are solid-looking trees, and illusion comes to an end, slain by our desire to increase it' (p.151). Whatever is of 'chief importance' in the essay, it is not the unfolding of Shakespearian characters, for these have become mere marionettes, as blandly mysterious as the 'purple backcloth', and exist as essences, timeless and spaceless. They are no longer objects, actors on a stage, but are described as if they were merely thoughts in the mind. In a review of Maeterlinck, William Archer came close to the heart of this prose technique and its aims -

'the tendency of all his thought is to minimize the operation of the will - that is why some people, vaguely realizing that morality rests on the hypothesis of free-will, call his work morbid and immoral... His characters very seldom give direct utterance to what is passing in their minds. They talk of everything else in the world, and, by the aid of an indefinable, elusive symbolism which is the poet's peculiar secret, we are enabled to divine more than they know themselves of their innermost emotions'.³⁴

The technique behind this theatre is essentially centrifugal, emptying the stage of all trappings of significance so that the real centre of attention is the individual thoughts of the collective audience. The individual minds re-create the mitigated gestures, apply non-logical modes of signification and, to adapt Duse's pronouncement on the theatre, digest not their dinner but their selves. The 'Crown at the bottom of the Fountain' (p.341) is a mise en abîm for the Symbolist stage with its gauze front curtain, for the acting of Duse, and for Symbolist art as a whole - Yeats learned this, if nothing else, from Maeterlinck. The artist will therefore concentrate not on things but the incommunicable expression of things, and will 'place on his canvas a house lost in the heart of the country, a door open at the end of a passage, a face or hands at rest' (p.312).

These things are as remote and unattainable as Deirdre and Conchobar, the more longed-for because they are always essentially inexperienceable - figured instants, 'which seem to absorb past and future in an intense consciousness of the present'.³⁵ Art itself then becomes the occasion for nostalgia: Shakespeare becomes an Archimedean figure, aloof from history, a 'wise man who was blind from very wisdom' (p.162). He becomes ahistorical, in fact, and appears not to have had a historical existence, but to have the same existence as his characters in the plays. The result is that Yeats's aesthetic judgment concerning the plays is badly skewed by the pressure of Symbolist and mythic concerns here.

In Yeats's view, the combination of myth and symbol opened up a whole range of understanding by which man might trace his way back to the fundamental relations between mind and symbol. It is to this combination that we must turn our attention, in order to investigate how his criticism was affected by his model of nostalgic selfhood.

A symbol, like a myth, was the representation of an essence for Yeats: 'a symbol is indeed the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame' (p.176). This essence can be apprehended only outside the antinomies of ordinary discourse, and is characterized by an aesthetics of absence: Blake

believed that the further he dropped behind him memory of time and space, reason builded upon sensation, morality founded for the ordering of the world; and the more he was absorbed in emotion; and, above all, in emotion escaped from the impulse of bodily longing and the restraints of bodily reason, in artistic emotion; the nearer did he come... to the unveiled face of God. (p.206)

Yet, whatever Yeats thought he meant by the word 'essence' - he never defines it and probably considered it beyond definition - it is at all events an entity for him - 'no worthy symbol of God existed but the inner world, the true humanity, to whose various aspects he gave many names... and whose most intimate expression was art and poetry' (pp. 206-7). Yeats's understanding of the symbol not as a perception but the expression of a perception paradoxically led him to see Blake's God and Divinity not as a model of an ineffable presence - only communicable as the medium of the model - but as an entity to be described. Yeats unwittingly contradicts his own correct apperceptions

of Symbolist art - that expression itself is the communication of our individual perception of reality. This contradiction stems from the misapprehension of reality in its ideal aspect as not dynamic and historical, but a hypostatized everpresent, devoid of 'memory of time and space'(p.206). In this timeless world where nothing is definitive in outline, nostalgia is overpowering, soothing conflict by abolishing future reference, and resting content that 'no symbol tells all its meaning to any generation'(p.230). In this comfortable mysticism, 'our imaginations are but fragments of the universal imagination, portions of the universal body of God, and... we enlarge our imagination by imaginative sympathy, and transform with the beauty and peace of art, the sorrows and joys of the world'(p.215). Yeats's concept of Anima Mundi did not begin with Per Amica Silentia Lunae. And yet, the 'universal imagination' of Ideas is an altogether different ideal from the later Anima Mundi, a nostalgic state couched in Paterian terms, where 'artists and poets... come at last to forget good and evil in an absorbing vision of the happy and the unhappy'(pp.198-9) - a vision conspicuously lacking in oxymoronic 'tragic joy'.

Absence of conflict through mystical transcendence is perhaps the main characteristic of Yeats's model of nostalgic selfhood, and its presence dominated in his aesthetic. Taken as a whole, the volume of essays celebrates the Symbolist doctrine of correspondance: all the major arts are represented, at times in close conjunction ('Speaking to the Psalter', for example), but, as we saw in the case of Shakespeare above, Yeats did not apply this synthesis to the creative self. In 'The Symbolism of Poetry' he posits two types of symbol, emotional and intellectual, thus shifting the usual Symbolist transcendence of the distinction between the sensory-concrete and the intellectual-abstract. This dichotomy, which foreshadows the antinomies of A Vision, Yeats did not attempt to heal, but at the same time he implicitly refutes any idea of conflict between the two types of symbols. The difference is not a qualitative one between the symbols per se, but is one of detachment of the creative self, artist or reader, from time -

it is the intellect that decides where the reader shall ponder over the procession of the symbols, and if the symbols are merely emotional, he gazes from amid the accidents and destinies of the world; but if the symbols are intellectual too, he becomes himself a part of pure intellect, and he is himself mingled with the procession. (p.251)

The innate polarity in this essay between the outer life of the world and the inner life of the soul may account for why Yeats has sided the intellect with the emotions, to balance the outer life of practical business; but nevertheless, the fusion is surprising in a poet deemed as purely expressive and affective in his early aesthetics. The point is an important one, for it leads to a fundamental insight into the creative process for Yeats. The change is one of perspective: the reader absorbs emotional symbols and his fundamental consciousness rests firmly within his self, but intellectual symbols absorb the reader into themselves so that his consciousness is subsumed in them. The reader, in effect, becomes a symbol and withdraws his soul, like Gerard de Nerval, 'from hope and memory, from desire and regret' (p.253), just as the artist will 'seek out those wavering, meditative, organic rhythms, which are the embodiment of the imagination, that neither desires nor hates, because it has done with time' (p.255). These 'rhythms' are the same ones that are present in the very prose of Ideas, as we have seen above. Released from time, the symbol and the symbolized self becomes inertly passive, a spectator of all it has been, one of the 'spectators of all the fullness of existence'.³⁶ Under these conditions, lacking the tension of conflict, myth turns to private nostalgia, the self replying to its identical self. When this happens, 'when the mind is left to commune with itself and no longer has to come to terms with objects it is in a sense reduced to imitating itself as an object'.³⁷ As with his self, so with his criticism: Symbolism gave Yeats license to create falsely eternal archetypes, to couch his criticism in these and not the dynamic flux of history, the 'accidents and destinies of the world', the shop for the heart's rag and bones (p.251). These eternal archetypes forestall any attempt at analysis. The only condition that is analyzed in any depth in Ideas is that where a writer lacks a mythology. The essays on Blake and Shelley are sensitive appraisals, and break new ground in their interpretations of each poet's dilemma. For the rest, criticism is seriously hampered by Yeats's model of nostalgic selfhood, out of which eternal critical archetypes are wrought and applied to the modern arts. The result is criticism that tells us little about the object of criticism, and a lot about Yeats's own private nostalgic yearnings. Under these conditions myth and criticism pass from being flexible, reflexive varieties of expression rooted in social discourse to being static, solipsistic entities.

It is doubtful whether Yeats could have achieved the greatness of his late poetry, and the luminous quality of prose that he did attain, if this is all in the way of a model of selfhood that he gleaned from his early interests in myth, nationalism and Symbolism. Yet from those same conditions under which nostalgia flourished, Yeats wrought a highly individual aesthetic structure in which he could possess himself of those features of myth and Symbolism he felt essential to his creativity, thus creating the conditions wherein he could use nostalgia instead of being dominated by it.

I said above that in Ideas we can trace the beginning of Yeats's journey from a model of nostalgic self to a self-created historical self, such as presented by A Vision. It is important to see Yeats's latter model evolving out of the former. We can see the seeds of the latter model in his essay, 'The Symbolism of Poetry' - 'all sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their pre-ordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions' (p.243). Yeats here avoids a Cartesian categorization of the self into numinous mind and solid matter by side-stepping the issue that gives rise to it - namely, the origin of consciousness of self. In doing so, he had provided himself with a third option to the Scylla and Charybdis of the self as entity and the self as sensational fragmentation. The self now is in a position to be determined by its own accumulated selfhood, 'the speech of the soul with itself', which exists at once within and without itself.³⁸ The suggestion is an extraordinary one, all the more surprising because Yeats apparently does not seem to consider it important to define whether the emotion rises from within or is given from without. Yeats 'prefers' the latter, and in this preference aligns himself, unwittingly perhaps here, with the cutting-edge of early twentieth century theories of selfhood. Otto Rank, Karl Abraham, Freud, Jung, Heidegger, Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss all at varying points posited the existence of forms of thought outside the individual psyche or self that affect the individual. As Yeats has it,

because an emotion does not exist, or does not become perceptible and active among us, till it has found its expression... and because no two modulations or arrangements of these evoke the same emotion, poets and painters and musicians, and in a less degree because their effects are momentary, day and night and cloud and shadow, are continually making and unmaking mankind. (p.244)

Yeats's merging in expressionism of the thing perceived (consciously learned or subconsciously impressed) and a perceiving (conscious or subconscious) subject approaches the cultural idiom of Durkheim's conscience collective. Yeats, of course, would have disagreed with Durkheim's directly social explanation of the function and origin of myth; nevertheless the idea of a group of forms created and re-created by the individual mind but influencing it from outside is common to both writers. The implications of this idea are brought out more clearly in the writings of Lévi-Strauss on myth. In his first volume of Mythologies, Lévi-Strauss pointed to the common property of myth and the symbol, the obscure origins and mode of function -

although the possibility cannot be excluded that the speakers who create and transmit myths may become aware of their structure and mode of operation, this cannot occur as a normal thing, but only partially and intermittently. It is the same with myths as with language: the individual who conscientiously applied phonological and grammatical laws in his speech, supposing he possessed the necessary knowledge and virtuosity to do so, would nevertheless lose the thread of his ideas almost immediately. In the same way the practice and use of mythological thought demand that its properties remain hidden: otherwise the subject would find himself in the position of the mythologist, who cannot believe in myths because it is his task to take them to pieces... I therefore claim to show, not how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men's minds without their being aware of the fact.³⁹

It is at precisely this meta-level that Yeats considers myth and the symbol: both signify signification, and do not attempt to describe it as if homologous with reality. Not coming from reality, and apparently with no origins within the individual imagination, myth and symbol seem anonymous:

from the moment they are seen as myths, and whatever their real origins, they exist only as elements embodied in a tradition. When the myth is repeated, the individual listeners are receiving a message that, properly speaking, is coming from nowhere; this is why it is credited with a supernatural origin. It is therefore comprehensible

that the unity of the myth should be projected onto a postulated centre, beyond the conscious perception of the listener through whom for the time being it is merely passing, up to the point at which the energy it radiates is consumed in the effort of unconscious re-organization that it has itself previously prompted.⁴⁰

But if the later Yeats knew this as a certainty, it is in Ideas that we can see him gradually turning to it. After all, Lévi-Strauss posits the same inversion that Yeats suggests when he talks of the Symbolist mingling himself in the procession of symbols and external forms, calling down into his self disembodied powers', emotions(p.243). This is not surprising when one takes into account that the problems concerning the primal symbolization processes of language and self which so intrigued the Symbolists are the very problems dealt with by Lévi-Strauss. Both held similar ideas on the primacy of relations between objects over objects themselves; and the indirect statement, the questionless question, in signifying signification, can be used as a vehicle to embody both nostalgic longing, and the process of flexible, historical becoming.

To say this of Yeats's creative and critical practice - as opposed to his burgeoning theory - in the eighteen-nineties is to be premature, however, for his attempt to repeat myth literally in art is merely a form of nostalgia, not a new becoming. Its sterility consists in his refusal to see that one cannot repeat the social conditions that give rise to, and inform, myth. He was early attracted to Symbolism because it supported myth as a mysterious entity. By using the mystical side of Symbolism he abolishes the need to re-create myth in contemporary terms - a re-creation that, in time, led him to see the terror as well as the beauty in the mythic archetype - and also overcomes his own ahistorical use of it. However, at the time of writing Ideas, Yeats's use of myth was trapped in an isolated and static context, for Yeats could never agree with Baudelaire that 'every phenomenon in man's environment is (potentially at least) raw material for a metaphor or poetic image'.⁴¹ Myth and symbol are not a dynamic unity, like that handled by Eliot, Pound or Joyce: in Ideas they are hypostatized, creating an isolated nostalgic realm where the object of memory has been mistaken for the safety

of recollection; a realm where certitude of selfhood is everything because it is so eminently absent, so urgently sought. It took Yeats some time to apply to his own work what he declared as his aesthetics in his literary reviews, and this discrepancy points up the status of Ideas as a watershed in Yeats's oeuvre.

Writing in 1906, Yeats dramatized his realization of the need to alter his treatment of symbol and myth as a revelatory experience:

without knowing it, I had come to care for nothing but impersonal beauty. I had set out on life with the thought of putting my very self into poetry, and had understood this as a representation of my own visions and an attempt to cut away the non-essential, but as I imagined the visions outside myself my imagination became full of decorative landscape and of still life. I thought of myself as something unmoving and silent living in the middle of my own mind and body, a grain of sand in Bloomsbury or in Connacht that Satan's watch-fiends cannot find. Then one day I understood quite suddenly, as the way is, that I was seeking something unchanging and unmixed and always outside myself, a Stone or an Elixir that was always out of reach, and that I myself was the fleeting thing that held out its hand. The more I tried to make my art deliberately beautiful, the more did I follow the opposite of myself, for deliberate beauty is like a woman always desiring man's desire. (The Cutting of an Agate, op. cit., p.217)

As is often the case with Yeats, the revelation had been a long time forming, and its primary outline may be traced in Ideas. Here, the genesis of the nature of the art object is traced back to the artist's view of his own self; and what Yeats was feeling toward uncertainly in Ideas is completed in this statement. As Buddha teaches that to desire liberation from desire is itself an imprisoning desire, so Yeats discovered that to desire complete unity with the self-idea is only to move further away from the ideal - a situation which, when not recognized, lends itself to nostalgia, in which

all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.⁴²

Yeats came to realize the falsity of being 'true to yourself', as he wrote in the letter to Katharine Tynan quoted above. Among other things, this posits the self as a thing to which to be true. It

is a view that is still present in Ideas, in those essays dealing with mythology, Symbolism and Ireland, and inherent in the prose style of the volume. Yet also in this book Yeats is discovering that the self is not a permanent arrangement of identifiable categories, but a dynamic process: it exists not in truth to itself, which takes its identity and its very self for granted, but in a conflict wherein it continuously affirms its existence by ceaseless re-creation. Just as history moves not in a straight line but in self-conflicting cycles, so the self is no linear progression but a perpetual repetition, unique in each return, of the self's opposite - its mask or self-image. The self is determined by states through which it passes, the 'moods', as Yeats, in a prototype gyre image calls them: those 'angels of more modern days ascending and descending upon their shining ladder' (p.306). Even in the most Symbolist essay, 'The Autumn of the Body', full of apocalyptic utterances as it is, Yeats could see the modern Western artist 'about to ascend, with the wealth, he has been for so long gathering, upon his shoulders, the stairway he has been descending from the first days' (p.301). We have in this image the seeds of the quintessential movement of A Vision - the whorling historical gyre that returns yet is unique; the self that is determined by patterns through which it passes, but which it also contains. The fundamental unifying concept of A Vision, that of conflict, is present, partially at least, in some of the aesthetic judgments in Ideas; Morris's poetry, for instance, 'often wearies us as the unbroken green of July wearies us' (p.84). His poetry lacks conflict and unifying tension, the embodiment of personal and historical struggle. Yeats understood that in his poetry at least, Morris failed to realize that existence precedes essence; that the self cannot be a datum but is itself the metaphor it projects. Morris's portraits of selfhood are passive and nostalgic because Morris's visions, like his designs, are 'full of decorative landscape and of still life'; they are iconostatic because the self is presumed harmony, assumed innocent, and therefore 'something unmoving and silent' (The Cutting of an Agate, op.cit., p.271). Yeats is in agreement with Morris that 'the important things... are beyond argument' (pp.87-8), and is still close enough to the seductions of nostalgic art to be delighted by

the vision of 'broad brows and golden beards and mild eyes and tranquil speech'(p.76). But he also recognizes that 'the barren blossoms do not seem to them the most beautiful'(p.77), that the devotion to art is not complete, because Morris had not understood the way in which his characters may 'become the joy that is themselves'(The Cutting of an Agate, op.cit., p.271). They do not feel the necessity to find some place upon the 'Green Tree'(p.88), the 'Tree of Life for the phoenix nest' (The Cutting of an Agate, op.cit., p.272). For, as Yeats later came to understand, the self is perpetually reborn of itself and its past and future, and the self discovers itself not as the grain of sand around which selfhood accumulates, but as the accumulation, the repeated gain and loss, of conflict and resolution in experience.

The steady discovery of this underlay Yeats's gradual rejection of nostalgic desire and his adoption of a doctrine of masks. Good art and criticism (and for Yeats, criticism was the hand-maid of his poetic art) do not flourish in the closed circle of nostalgia, and the faults in Yeats's poetry before the turn of the century are also present in his criticism. In both, his personal interests and ideas are too earnest and transparent to embody 'reality and justice'.⁴³ His early mistake was to ignore the disjunction between the potential and the manifest, to go straight to Celtic mythology and treat of that alone, without realizing as he does partially in Ideas, and fully in A Vision that, living in a self-consciously historical society, history - the slow accretion of myriad selves - must be his mythology. This leads, as in essays like 'The Theatre' and 'The Autumn of the Body' to mistakes about the character of the age's literature, predictions of the rent veil of the temple, which Yeats later corrected in the chapter in his Autobiographies entitled 'The Trembling of the Veil'. Instead of creating from nostalgic desire and the security of a given self fixed in atemporal paradigms, the artist must, like one of Yeats's later heroes, Balzac, plunge into history, organic and dialectical, and re-create in art and criticism the very values that constitute his selfhood.

Conclusion

I have examined the differing effects of the model of nostalgic selfhood in works by three different authors. It remains now to state conclusions concerning the delicate relation between the model of nostalgic selfhood and literary value in the works.

In The Well-Beloved, Hardy chose a hero who attempts, in an indirect way, to force reality to conform to his nostalgic images of it. The narrative form of the novel would lead us to believe that this is the main conflict in the story. But this is not so. The central conflict of nostalgia lies within Jocelyn's selfhood, between his desire for a nostalgic existence and his awareness of its emptiness. Whether Hardy was aware that the balanced irony of the narrative had missed the central conflict of the model is hard to tell. It is clear at any rate that he misunderstood the model of selfhood he was dealing with, and that this misapprehension confuses the novel's theme by the wrong application in narrative and tone, of a deterministic model of selfhood. This contrasts with Tess, where the novel succeeds because of the deterministic model of self that it holds.

As a novel, then, The Well-Beloved fails because of Hardy's indecisive handling of the main themes. Yet artistic defeat, Jocelyn's or Hardy's, need not be the necessary corollary of such a theme. After all, what Hardy treats as obsession, Proust treats as a universal psychological law in the great themes of love and mourning. When Marcel pursues substitutes of Albertine he is indulging in the universal activity of satisfying the 'désir premier' present in apparently unrelated desires. And where Jocelyn is 'cured' of his endless nostalgic quest by losing his art, Marcel finds his self in the reflection on a failure of self-possession; in the scrupulously detailed literary mémoire of the failure:

I had guessed long ago in the Champs-Élysée, and had since established to my own satisfaction, that when we are in love with a woman, we simply project into her a state of our own soul, that the important thing is, therefore, not the worth of the woman but the depth of the state.⁴⁴

The similarity and the difference in attitude towards the 'depth of the state' can be seen if one compares this passage to the passage which opens the discussion on Tess. Jocelyn's goal is to fill the void of consciousness with a self which he feels he

will permanently possess. This is the goal of Marcel's recherche, too, but where Marcel does so through transmuting his life entirely into his art, Jocelyn is unable to effect this change. As a character he is restricted by the pervasive, balanced irony of the narrative which will allow him so much room to develop, and no more. Where Marcel's struggle and his art are at the centre of his novel, Jocelyn's struggle and his art in The Well-Beloved are only on the periphery. The narrative holds our attention, and mars the novel.

In a similar fashion, the basic appeal of pastoral which, more than any of its single traits and motives Housman shares, is one of protest against the constant struggle for existence and security, which Housman's pastoral of the self intensifies by isolating the individual spatially and temporally from the rest of his society. The nostalgic self in Housman's pastoral seeks refuge from the conflict and constraints of history and society by creating a vicariously eternal mythical realm; a projection of all its yearnings. The persona can then desire not a thing, an object or landscape, but a desire of security. The ambiguity of this 'of' is exactly that used by Housman in poem XVI, and pointed out by Randall Jarrell.⁴⁵ All this does not mean that Housman wrote bad poetry because he wrote around nostalgic concerns - far from it. But with such subject-matter-desiring desire - poetry is severely circumscribed in the devices it can successfully use. And because Housman did not sufficiently master his model of nostalgic selfhood, he could not foresee consequences of the model's literary mediation that would be ultimately damaging to his poetry. The tension that results from the poet's major device of oscillation is a fruitful one; but it has a detrimental effect on the poetry as well. It limits the poetry to nostalgic concerns, restricts it to a static form. Both Hardy in The Well-Beloved and Housman in most of his verse are limited in their achievement because they did not understand the effects that arise when a model of nostalgic selfhood is mediated in narrative and verse.

Nostalgia may also seek to find security in a synthetic realm of myth that masquerades as an eternal archetype. As Roland Barthes puts it -

one can conceive of very ancient myths, but there are no eternal ones; for it is human history which converts reality into speech, and it alone rules the life and death of mythical language. Ancient or not, mythology can only have an historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things. (Barthes, p.110)

But the early Yeats believed this was so. He 'naturalized' myth, believing it an eternal form in nature, not an historical evolution. The difference between his belief in Celtic myth and his use of it, and his belief in his own synthetic system lies neither in the quality of belief or use to which he put it, but in the fact that his own system was one hewn from history, not 'found' in nature. In Ideas Yeats did not fully appreciate how 'myth is a type of speech defined by its intention' (Barthes, p.124); he mistook the nature of myth, dazzled by the movement in which the 'world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences' (Barthes, pp.142-3). The glamour of essentiality cast over history by myth does away with the open relativity of historical and existential inquiry; and it is this which separates Yeats's earlier and later researches in myth. The former are superficially historical, and retrospective; the latter, organizational, synthetic, prospective. The first depends on recollection, and leaves itself open to nostalgic desire; the second practices repetition within history. Lévi-Strauss points to the misconception Yeats had of myth:

the study of myths raises a methodological problem in that it cannot be carried out according to the Cartesian principle of breaking down the difficulty into as many parts as may be necessary for finding the solution. There is no real end to mythological analysis, no hidden unity to be grasped once the breaking-down process has been completed. [The unity of myth] is a phenomenon of the imagination, resulting from the attempt at interpretation; and its function is to endow the myth with synthetic form and to prevent its disintegration into a confusion of opposites.⁴⁶

Yeats could not entirely grasp the full significance of this in his early poetry and prose, partly because he misunderstood the value of myth in art, and partly because he misunderstood how Symbolism may be applied to myth. For it seemed to Yeats, absorbed in

Symbolist theory and practice, that Symbolism, in its transcendent-izing capacity, offered a supra-rational escape from the double-bind of consciousness, of which the use of myth in art offered a classic example. One may pass 'from the state of reader to that of mythologist' (Barthes, p.124), but one cannot participate in both simultaneously.

Yeats's desire to do so in most of the criticism in Ideas is both cause and consequence of his model of nostalgic selfhood. It is a model that inhibits his criticism because it gives rise to a style that tells us more about Yeats himself than the object of criticism. There is nothing wrong with this type of criticism - Pater's The Renaissance is a fine example of it. But its delicate critical balance can only be sustained if the critic is sufficiently aware of its effect and its cause. The epistemological questions Pater deals with in his criticism ('what is this song or picture ... to me?') remain unasked in Yeats's model of nostalgic selfhood precisely because nostalgia led Yeats away from asking such questions, and led him to impose arbitrary mythic and Symbolist designs on the objects of his criticism. Yeats was not sufficiently aware of his model, and therefore his criticism is flawed. Later, when he realized the real relation between myth and history, and how Symbolism may be applied to it, his model changed and from it sprang his mature poetry and prose.

In the texts of all three authors here, misunderstandings of their models lead to a confusion of subject-matter and style, a kind of inarticulacy. Their works lack a uniformity of purpose, 'une espèce de fondu', because they are used by their models.⁴⁷ Not fully aware of the model of nostalgic selfhood they are trying to create, their work becomes nostalgic, and flawed. That a writer may use a model of nostalgic selfhood and write well is proven by the massive example of Proust - the most obvious, though by no means the only instance - who used nostalgia to create one of the finest novels of the modern age.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. The Well-Beloved, ed. by J. Hillis Miller, with notes by Edward Mendelson, The New Wessex Edition (London, 1975), p.26. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
2. The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, ed. by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford, 1978-), vol. II (1893-1901), pp.168-9.
3. Jose Ortega Y Gasset, 'The Nature of the Novel', translated by Evelyn Rugg and Diego Marin, The Hudson Review, X (Spring, 1957), p.39.
4. Letters, op.cit., II, p.160.
5. The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy, edited by James Gibson, The New Wessex Edition (London, 1976), 'After the Last Breath', lls. 15-16, p.270.
6. The Letters of A.E. Housman, ed. by Henry Maas (London, 1971), p.328. See also p.347.
7. Ibid., p.329.
8. The Collected Poems of A.E. Housman (London, 1939, reprinted with corrections, 1971), p.10. Further references to this edition are indicated after quotations in the text by the poem's number.
9. The Housman/Harris exchange is treated by Cleanth Brooks in his essay, 'Alfred Edward Housman', first published in Anniversary Lectures (Washington D.C., 1959), pp.48-51. It may also be found in the same essay, in A.E. Housman: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Christopher Ricks (New Jersey, 1976), pp.76-7.
10. The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts, ed. by Valerie Eliot (New York, 1971), p.1. C. Valerii Catulli Carmina, ed. by R.A.B. Mynors, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1958), I, 4.
11. Letters, op.cit., p.329.
12. The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot, op.cit., 'The Waste Land', p.62.
13. See 'The Pastoral of the Self', Daedalus, vol.88 (1959), no.4, pp.686-700. See also 'The Oaten Flute', Harvard Library Bulletin, vol.11 (1957), no.2, pp.147-84.
14. Thomas G. Rosenmayer, The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European pastoral lyric (London, 1969), pp.42-3 and passim.
15. See Poggioli, The Oaten Flute: essays on pastoral poetry and the pastoral ideal (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), pp.165-6.
16. Mythologies, selected and translated by Annette Lavers (London, 1972), pp.123-4.
17. Gaston Bachelard, L'Eau et les rêves (Paris, 1942), p.32. Bachelard quotes from Lavellè's study of Narcissus.

18. Ibid., p.32.
19. Rosenmayer, op.cit., pp.96-7.
20. Gaëtan Picon, Lecture de Proust (Paris, 1963), p.121.
21. B.G. Legget, The Poetic Art of A.E. Housman (Nebraska, 1978), pp. 120-124.
22. Lionel Trilling, 'Freud and Literature', in The Liberal Imagination (New York, 1950), p.55, quoted by Leggett, op.cit., p.124.
23. Collected Papers, translated under the supervision of Joan Rivière, The International Psycho-Analytic Library, 4 vols. (London, 1950), II, pp.369-70.
24. Søren Kierkegaard, Repetition, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1957), epigraph.
25. The Letters of W.B. Yeats, ed. by Allan Wade (London, 1954), p.51.
26. Ibid., pp.92, 247.
27. Ideas of Good and Evil (London, 1903), pp.173-4. Further references to this edition are included after quotations in the text.
28. Uncollected Prose of W.B. Yeats, ed. by John P. Frayne, 2 vols. (London, 1970), I, p.174.
29. Ibid., p.174.
30. The Cantos of Ezra Pound, revised collected edition (London, 1975), Section: Rock Drill de los Cantares, LXXXV-XCV, p.546.
31. Barthes, op.cit., p.143.
32. Anna E. Balakian, The Symbolist Movement: A Critical Appraisal (New York, 1967), p.9.
33. See, for example, pp.52, 162, 213, 216.
34. The New Budget, 4 April 1895, quoted in John Stokes, Resistible Theatres (London, 1972), p.176.
35. Pater, The Renaissance, p.118.
36. Ibid., p.118.
37. Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked, translated by John and Doreen Weightman (London, 1970), p.10.
38. The Cutting of an Agate, in Essays and Introductions (London, 1961, reprinted 1974), p.333.
39. Op.cit., pp.11-12. Lévi-Strauss's perceptions of the model nature of myth and selfhood parallel Yeats's discoveries at a number of points. The closing paragraph of the third volume of Mythologiques shows its author's urgent concern to turn European civilization back from the hell - 'enfer' - in which it has become imprisoned by its self-centredness (Mythologiques III: L'origine des manières de table, Paris, 1968, p.422). Yeats's own myth of mythologies, A Vision, was a similar, though much more personal, analysis and reinterpretation of the place of the self in European culture - an analysis that began in Ideas of Good and Evil.

40. Ibid., p.17.
41. A.G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895, second edition (Oxford, 1968), pp.265-6.
42. The Poems of Tennyson, ed. by Christopher Ricks (London, 1969), 'Ulysses', lls.19-21, p.563.
43. A Vision, second edition (London, 1937), p.25.
44. Remembrance of Things Past, op.cit., I, p.627.
45. A.E. Housman: A Collection of Critical Essays, op.cit., pp.59-60.
46. Lévi-Strauss, op.cit., p.5.
47. Correspondance générale de Marcel Proust, ed. by Robert Proust and Paul Brach (Paris, 1930-36), vol. II, Lettres à la Comtesse de Noailles, 1901-1919 (Paris, 1931), pp.86-7.

CHAPTER FIVE THE AESTHETIC SELF

"Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben"

— Wilhelm Goethe, Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche, (Zürich, 1949), Faust eine Tragödie, 1.4727

The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry

Reading Walter Pater's writings, one is confronted with an unusual problem. Pater's status as an author, his auctoritas upon which we rely as readers, appears ambiguous and blurred. Often we are presented with a strange admixture of metaphysics and art criticism, with no indication of the formal status of the writing. Indeed, it could be said that none of the conventional literary forms of the century gave Pater an outlet for his gifts. He is only a minor critic, a dubious art-historian, little of a philosopher. Marius the Epicurean may legitimately be termed a failed novel, and Pater felt bound to explain the queeriness of his short stories as a new genre, the 'imaginary portrait'.¹ He had no readily acceptable means of projecting, re-presenting, transforming, his private agonies into the richness and strangeness of the familiar forms. Thus, Pater is apparently more exposed in his despairs, hesitations, expediences; the style may seem less a function of the work than of the personality; the oeuvre appears neither to ask for suspension of disbelief nor to compel trust. Consequently, the models of selfhood which always lie at the centre of Pater's attention, which feed and are fed by the immediate narrative concerns, are simultaneously more vulnerable and less apparent; more hidden but no less radiant for that; and nowhere more so than in the two completed forms of The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry and Marius the Epicurean.

When The Renaissance was first published in 1873 it became clear that the book was a new departure in genre. The text belied its weighty title, Studies in the History of the Renaissance, redolent of Froude or Michelet; and its artistic content plainly did not correspond to Ruskinian canons of art criticism — did not,

in fact, seem to correspond to any contemporary forms. Most critics misunderstood the book's radical qualities; and one of them, Mrs. Pattison, criticized Pater for a misleading use of the word 'history'.² Pater accepted her criticism and in later editions changed the title to the one above. Neither title is an accurate description of the book's real subject, however. Pater gives us his intentions in the Preface -

'to see the object as in itself it really is', has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly.³

Pater was undoubtedly a close and shrewd observer of Arnold's Culture, and the influence of Ruskin shadowed Pater as it did the rest of Oxford in the sixties and seventies; but neither of these two sages are responsible for the sudden change of direction that occurs around the innocuous semi-colon in the above quotation. Aesthetics, not the history or the study of art, is Pater's main subject, one that leads naturally for him to epistemological concerns: 'what is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me?... How is my nature modified by its presence and under its influence?'(pp.xix-xx). Pater never dealt in aesthetics 'with the abstract question what beauty is in itself or what its exact relation to truth and experience', believing these metaphysical questions to be 'as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere'(p.xx). In this, he laid himself open to charges of 'languorous playing with things of beauty, in a kind of opiate dream' from more philosophically inclined critics; but it is hard to see how these criticisms can be substantiated.⁴ Many philosophers, including Kant, have been puzzled that a process of reasoning may have as its ending not a judgment but an experience; yet it is so.⁵ Any aesthetic judgment and resultant argument begins and ends in an aesthetic experience, and to accord Beauty its traditional eminence is to suggest that the problem of aesthetics lies in meaning rather than perception and epistemology. The whole argument of The Renaissance treats the artistic experience-subject as it is to the will, and the product of specific forms of attention - as central in any aesthetic argument; and since

criticism of the experience of art involves for Pater criticism of the activity of mind, it follows for him that a position in the former is symptomatic of a position in the latter. Further to this, Pater would have agreed that 'a certain concept of the mind implies a concept of the world: we cannot have the concept of the mind, unless we see that in the self-understanding of the mind, the concept of the world is already implied'.⁶ No discussion of Pater's writings can afford to ignore these two points; for to do so is to misunderstand one of his fundamental insights into art and experience.

Pater, then, eschews abstract metaphysics and with it the form of argument conventional in aesthetic criticism, of which Hegel's Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik is the epitome. His essays treat of art objects but do not end there: they go on to dwell upon the nature of selfhood, and how it is embodied and transformed in art. The essays are not transparent media, but an overtly self-conscious form: they do not simply present an aesthetic object and argument attached, but have the double focal points of art and selfhood to guide the perspectives of their content. The more metaphysical argument is embedded in the aesthetic argument, with important results for both, as we shall see. For the reader, the form of the essays becomes all the more reflexive and self-conscious: he may think he is reading of Della Robbia's craftwork when in actuality he is also being led into a complex presentation of types of selfhood throughout the book.

It is important to grasp the method by which Pater organizes his essays. In his book The Ritual of Interpretation Richard Stein has pointed out that the series of chapters in the first edition form a definite pattern corresponding to the ideal aesthetic life, in which maturity is attained in the chapter on Leonardo da Vinci.⁷ He draws the analogy between this pattern and that of Hegel, who also set out in his Phenomenology of the Mind to chart the progress of a mind on the path to maturity from the falsity of sense-consciousness to the truth of Absolute Knowledge. Now Pater's debts to Hegel are fairly extensive, both in The Renaissance and Plato and Platonism, but it is highly unlikely that Pater ever thought of the schema of The Renaissance as a linear one; particularly since he is at pains in Marius the Epicurean and elsewhere to deny the linear narrative of a Bildungsroman.

Rather, the movement is cyclic. Each essay describes an artist's self as it is absorbed in his work; how it infuses and transforms and is transformed by, his work. There is no linear progression, but a constant, circling dwelling upon this one subject, exploring at many levels the theme's ramifications in both art and life. This, as we shall see, is reflected in Pater's prose style.

Pater opens his theme simply enough. 'Two French Stories' is constructed around the comparison of two medieval French prose romances. The first is characterized by 'strength' - mentioned four times in relation to the story - and the second by 'sweetness' (referred to three times). The two stories are used as diametric poles around which seemingly opposing qualities are attached. Pater thus characterizes the distinctions between the Renaissance and the Middle Ages by attributing to them opposing values. This seems to contradict a passage near the start of the essay:

theories which bring into connexion with each other modes of thought and feeling, periods of taste, forms of art and poetry, which the narrowness of men's minds constantly tends to oppose to each other, have a great stimulus for the intellect, and are almost always worth understanding. It is so with this theory of a Renaissance within the middle age. (p.2)

Pater appears to be assigning to the Renaissance and the Middle Ages opposite values, then insisting upon cultural continuity between the two periods. This is, in fact, another opposition, only on a greater scale. By separating the values of the two periods, Pater allows us to see in what way they are connected; how the respective strength and sweetness, separate virtues in the early milieu of the two romances, are resolved into the later Renaissance of the fifteenth century.

But if the two romances are in themselves examples of separation, then the essay's resolution must lie elsewhere. It lies in the personality of Abelard, who 'connects the expression of this liberty of heart with the free play of human intelligence around all subjects presented to it, with the liberty of the intellect, as that age understood it' (p.3). Parallel to the antithetical symmetry of those image clusters around the two romances is that anti-thesis which finds its resolution in Abelard - the intellect or mind, and the heart or imagination. It can do so because Abelard

is the symbol of freedom in the essay: the phrase which contains the idea of merging intellect and imagination is repeated five times in the essay, each time with a slightly different emphasis; but on each occasion referring to or implying a new-found freedom.⁸ In this first essay, Pater develops an important element of his aesthetic argument: namely, that the conjunction of imagination and reason is crucial if we are to understand fully the nature of the aesthetic experience; and such a conjunction occurs most generally in times of renaissance, when there exists more freedom of choice in theories, and a greater measure of individual freedom for the creative self. This becomes important in relation to the 'bewildering toils' of determinism in 'Winckelmann'.

The temperament of Abelard is the focus for all the antitheses that Pater sets up to illustrate the various tendencies in the spirit of the twelfth century Renaissance. The quality of freedom that he embodies, Pater defines as 'antinomianism', the 'spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the time' (p.18) which, by reaching out beyond 'the spiritual system then actually realized' wins for itself 'a new kingdom of feeling and sensation and thought' (p.5). Repetition and contrast lend persuasion to Pater's argument here: the 'child of light' is opposed to both the 'shadowy house' and 'the world of something like shadows' on the preceding pages. 'Reason and heart and senses' correspond to the more abstract 'feeling and sensation and thought'. Abelard is introduced in the essay at the beginning and at the end; and his spirit of 'languid sweetness' (p.4) is tempered with the 'strength' of the first French story by being linked with it on page 7 and again, at the end, on page 20. His unity of selfhood is attested when Pater declares that he attains to 'modes of ideal living' in 'the enchanted region of the Renaissance'.

Each essay in The Renaissance, so diverse and unrelated to any other at first glance, has an equally strong structural under-pinning, which itself is based upon Pater's double foci of art and selfhood. The latter theme develops more slowly as it must; for its terms of reference are hidden in the text, and radiate through the media of the aesthetic argument. This is obvious in essays such as 'Pico della Mirandola' and 'Sandro Botticelli', but not so apparent in 'Luca della Robbia', which at first seems to have been patched

up from odds and ends of other essays. However, on closer reading it soon becomes clear that Pater draws his criticism into a coherent whole by centralizing the figure of Luca: just as the analysis of one aspect of Botticelli's temperament, his 'peculiar sentiment' binds the structure of the previous essay, so here it is one 'special characteristic' which Luca imparts to his school that is the cohesive force. The workmen of his school 'bear the impress of a personal quality... it is what we call expression, carried to its highest intensity of degree'(p.56).

Pater links this 'personal quality' to Luca's temperament, seeing his art as impressed by 'what is most inward and peculiar in his moods, and manner of apprehension'(p.56). Characteristically, Pater does not discuss Luca's duality of selfhood except as it irradiates his work; and even the crucial quality of 'expression' is not discussed overtly, but embodied as 'the passing of a smile over the face of a child, the ripple of the air on a still day over the curtain of a window ajar'(p.50). This is no mere impressionistic criticism. Pater's tactics here are a logical extension of the position he adopts in the Conclusion, where he refuses to deal with perception and experience as metaphysical abstractions. Here, he does not discuss the critical term he employs. A discussion of expression is not expression, is not at all the quality of 'intimité' which he sees in Luca's work and wants to impart to the reader. Hence, the sense of the above description lies not in meaning alone but in the meticulous artistry of style. The two halves of the description are themselves symmetrical, with the word 'over' as a fulcrum in each case. The rhythms are expertly judged - the two heavy stresses on 'still day', for example, act as an effective brake on the previous run of unstressed syllables; and since the first line is a set of nearly identical parallelisms, Pater alters the symmetry of the second line, so as to defeat the boredom of another almost perfect pair. In this way, Pater articulates the quality of expression by expression.

To illustrate this meaning by means of Luca's sculpture is the next step, and Pater does this by setting out the artistic problem facing Luca and describing how he managed to solve it. The 'special limitation of sculpture' is its tendency to a 'hard realism, a one sided presentment of mere form, that solid material frame which only motion can relieve'(pp.50-51). Pater divides the history of sculpture into two broad periods - a division which is based

both on characteristics in the sculptor's handling of his medium's form and his culture's ideas of what constituted selfhood. Thus, the Greeks solved the problem by seeking 'the type in the individual' and by abstracting and expressing 'only what is structural and permanent' (p.51). This necessarily led to sacrificing the qualities of expression ('what was inward and unseen'), restricting the range of the sculptor's effects. Pater then opposes this type of sculpture to that of Michelangelo, whose temperament is characterized by Pater as a balance of medieval 'inwardness and introspection' and Renaissance 'profound expressiveness' (pp.52, 49). He avoids a 'too heavy realism' through his 'individuality and intensity of expression', which lends to his work the all-important 'effect of accident' (p.52), which is the essence of Pater's own description of expression above. The Greeks could only achieve this effect through the unintentional accidents of time which thawed out the frozen realism of the Venus of Melos; and even Botticelli owed his 'peculiar sentiment' partly to 'an incompleteness of resources, inseparable from the art of that time' (p.46). Michelangelo worked towards a 'studied incompleteness' which 'suggests rather than realizes actual form'. By employing this method, Michelangelo received sculpture's 'stiff realism' while still imparting to it 'breadth, pulsation, the effect of life' (p.53).

The dynamic in the aesthetic schema that Pater sets out here is the change in notions of what constitutes an ideal selfhood. Just as an artist's work is informed and transformed by his conception of selfhood, so models of the self are inferred by Pater from their art, in a procedure akin to Baudelaire's correspondances. Thus, the Greeks sought 'the type in the individual'; Michelangelo 'secured for his work individuality' through his own intense individualism (pp.51-2). Where the Greek concept of selfhood is static and changeless, Michelangelo's is fluid and metamorphic. Between these two poles of selfhood (the typical, delimited, and the individualized, unlimited), between frozen and fluid art, between colourless antiquities and the 'strange bright colours' of oriental pottery, Luca's best work was produced, embodying the specific expressive value of 'intimité' (p.56).

In the next two essays, 'The Poetry of Michelangelo' and 'Leonardo da Vinci' the unlimited artistic selfhood predominates, unfettered in art or life by systems of 'conventionalism'. Thus, in 'Leonardo da Vinci', the leitmotif is stated explicitly at the start: Leonardo possessed 'a genius of which one characteristic is the tendency to lose itself in a refined and graceful mystery' (p.77).

Mystery is the keyword, not the least in its etymological associations⁹ - Leonardo seemed to reflect 'some scheme of the world within' in all his work(pp.77-8). The essay takes the form of a journey into the dark heart of this mystery, so that the reader is led on two journeys simultaneously - through the chronology of Leonardo's life, and on a deeper level, into the centre of the mystery around his art. These two levels later multiply in the essay's climax, the description of La Gioconda, when Pater deepens his modernizing bias.

Using the Platonic metaphor of the cave, Pater describes Leonardo becoming self-conscious, literally 'going deep' into his self, reaching back to those two childhood impressions, 'the smiling of women and the motion of great waters'. These two images, symbols of beauty and terror, form the antithetical poles of Leonardo's personality, and are part of the origin of his 'mystery', the 'subtlest retreats' of the 'sources of expression' in him(p.81). The impulses of these two feelings that Pater sees as driving forces in Leonardo's work also characterize Pater's reaction to Leonardo's mystery - he is beckoned by its beauty, threatened by his sense of its overwhelming power, and this continual oscillation is reflected in his prose, which is unusually dense and hesitant. The device that Ludovico Sforza took for himself - the mulberry tree, symbol 'in its long delay and sudden yielding of flowers and fruit together' of intuitive wisdom - could be applied to Leonardo and Pater as well(p.85).

The description of La Gioconda is the epitome of this sudden yielding, Pater's own 'moment of bien-être'(p.89). So far, the atmosphere of the essay has been one of expectation - the narrative is continually broken up and the pieces re-arranged into new patterns; present tenses and present participles abound; image after image is given to the reader then withdrawn and replaced by another, as if Pater himself is dissatisfied with the incompleteness of the images created. With La Gioconda, however, Pater seems to find the ideal image that will express all he wants to say. He is, in fact, deliberately matching Leonardo's climacteric with his own; and this identification is strengthened by the basic similarity of the problem facing both artists as Pater sees it: the transmutation of intensely personal ideas into coherent images(p.88).

It is all there in the face of Lady Lisa. The portrait appears as if bracketed in the texture of Pater's style, an epoché which paradoxically serves to heighten the painting's haecceitas. Within it, the Renaissance becomes the culmination of more than a millenium of experience, of the loss and rediscovery of Greece and Rome, the spiritualization of the Middle Ages, the influences of the Orient, Paganism, Christianity with its immortal longings, the modern as the growing product of all its past. It becomes a moment of time within the fifteenth century Renaissance, a renascent moment for contemporary man, for Pater, for you and me, for all time. Thought, experience, and outward form are united, together with the great opposites good and evil, lust and love, war and peace, the spirit and the senses. Above all there is the recognition of the perpetual flux of history and of this packed, figured moment of rest in its endless passage - both the older sense of life's transience and the chaos of the Heraclitean flux, and the modern conception of organic process and of history as one with that process.

Nor is there in the liturgical manner of the passage the indulgence of merely affective imagery often alleged against it. The entire passage is a complex skein of images whose strands link it not only to the essay, but also to the text as a whole. Thus, the 'subdued and graceful mystery' is an echo of page 89, where, at the moment of 'bien-être', the 'idea is stricken into colour and imagery' and 'painting pleases the eye while it satisfies the soul'. Mona Lisa's beauty is 'wrought out from within' (p.98), from that type of beauty which is a parallel of the 'scheme of the world within' (pp.77-8). She 'has been dead many times', like Persephone; 'a diver in deep seas' refers to the art of 'going deep' into the 'intimate presence' of things (p.81), and also to Leonardo's way of seeing things as if 'in some brief interval of falling rain at daybreak, or through deep water' (p.87). 'Trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants' is echoed in 'The School of Giorgione' (p.104), where Pater talks of a great picture as being 'a space of such fallen light, caught as the colours are in an Eastern carpet'; and in 'Pico della Mirandola', where the fifteenth century allegorical interpretations in theology and philosophy are described as 'weaving strange fancies' and being a 'strange web of imagery' (a few lines previously Pater writes that one must 'go

below the surface, and bring up the supposed secondary, or still more remote meaning' - pp.26-7). The passage is even self-referential: just as the beauty of Mona Lisa is 'wrought out', so 'modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life'(pp.98-9).

Moreover, the formal aspects of the writing embody the insidious collusion of art and experience, its mutual antagonism. The orchestrated flow and undulant gather and break of clauses within the sentences contrast with the static autonomy of the sentences themselves, devoid of connectives, each sentence a new beginning, its meaning quite self-contained in a perfection of form. In order to bridge the constituents of the argument the reader must consciously bring his own thoughts to bear upon the text; but the complex grammar inevitably drags at his eye, compelling him to be more aware of the intricacy of the prose. The style invites reflection and analysis because of its self-conscious quality; yet by mesmerizing the reader with its polished cadences it also repels it. The antinomian movement creates a tension which draws the reader on; but the overall clarity of argument is then obscured. Such ambivalent tension is a result of Pater's sense of historical flux and his cultural relativism: the relativism of the Preface ('beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative' - p.xix), the flux of the Conclusion. Things are never as they appear, and in any case they always appear differently to different people - this for you, that for me. And language, the medium of literature, is perhaps the most unstable thing of all, since its reception depends on our own perception and feelings, past and present - 'the ornamental word, the figure, the accessory form or colour or reference, is rarely content to die to thought precisely at the right moment, but will inevitably linger awhile, stirring a long "brain-wave" behind it of perhaps quite alien associations'.¹⁰

Given this, Pater's main problem is how to convey his peculiar sense of fact in a reasonably coherent manner. It is this which accounts for the air of hesitation, the repeated qualifications in his prose. Meaning becomes kaleidoscopic, multilateral, and unfinished - 'we recognize one of those symbolical inventions in which the ostensible subject is used, not as matter

for definite pictorial realization, but as the starting-point of a train of sentiment, subtle and vague as a piece of music' (p.93). This is true not only for Leonardo and Pater, the conscious artists, but for ourselves as well. Pater recognized the transubstantiating element in Leonardo's genius: Leonardo used 'incidents of sacred story, not for their own sake or as mere subjects for pictorial realization, but as a cryptic language for fancies all his own'. Just as Leonardo transformed Mona Lisa 'to the seventh heaven of symbolical awareness', so Pater is transforming Leonardo's painting (p.97). The painting then becomes, like Montaigne's book, 'consubstantial à son auteur', and we are all condamnés, condemned to be authors in as profound a sense as the religious doctrine to which these words might be said to allude.

'Besides, the picture is a portrait' (p.97). But it is not a conventional portrait of any high-born lady. It belongs to that category of portraits which are a revelation of some psychological obsession within the painter - those of Rembrandt and Goya, and some of Raphael and Titian. Only incidentally does this category concern itself with the portrayal of any individual characteristics as they really are (or ought to be), or evidence of status or affluence in the sitter. The same is true of Pater's portrait of the portrait, and naturally he records the obsession within himself - one similar to that he intuitively finds in Leonardo. Besides too, the motive behind renaissance is for Pater, as the context makes plain, of wider significance for the function of art than that Renaissance which he sees as such a comprehensive illustration of it. Like Platonism, it is a 'group of tendencies' - a way of seeing that pierces through historical and narrative boundaries to the seminal truth that histoire is creation since it is re-creation.¹¹

Yet for all this, the basis of Pater's complex correspondances appears obscure. On what grounding or method does he presume to draw up these schemata; and where lies the ostensive verification of his insights? The intensely self-referring argument, dealing in terms of diaphanous selfhoods who hold themselves apart from their time like Sebastian van Storck, and embodied in a highly mannered prose, would appear to stem from a model of narcissistic selfhood and to

be mirroring that model narcissistically. But to say that The Renaissance is based on a model of narcissistic selfhood is to misinterpret the book's 'philosophic substructure' entirely. To understand Pater's model, it is necessary to understand his ideas on aesthetic interest: within the aesthetic argument lies his model of selfhood.

In this chapter so far, Pater seems to be implicitly subscribing to the Hegelian concept of Kunstwollen, of the prevailing artistic intention which each work of art is supposed to display. Now this branch of historicism contains much truth and falsehood intermingled; and its criticism would be a lengthy affair. However, this would be unnecessary, for Pater often ignores its basic critical tenets; and while he frequently appeals to historical criticism, he does so as an outsider. Rather, Pater was concerned to provide some independent account of aesthetic interest, in the artist and in the spectator; and by an understanding of this to arrive at how we perceive the relation between our selves and the world.

The problem is set out and solved in relation to the painting of the school of Giorgione. Pater comments on the facility of much synaesthetic criticism: 'for, as art addresses not pure sense, still less the pure intellect, but the "imaginative reason" through the senses, there are differences of kind in aesthetic beauty, corresponding to the differences in kind of the gifts of sense themselves' (p.102). Once again, Pater follows the German Romantic aestheticians he was well read in, but only so far: he rejects their systems of 'art-casuistries' and returns to the mental phenomena of aesthetic perception, to the concept of beauty absorbed into a certain pattern of thought. The key phrase in the above passage is '"imaginative reason"'. A number of writers had used the phrase to describe a fairly commonplace uniting of emotion and intellect.¹² Pater uses the phrase in a rather different, more radical sense as a result of his views on the place of imagination in the aesthetic experience.

Since the eighteenth century imagination has been a predominant quality in aesthetic theory. Postulating the view that concept and percept are inseparable, Kant attempted to unite the aesthetic with the rest of experience under the capacity of imagination, thus giving impetus to a theory of imagination as a force active in every cognitive state.¹³ It was for him, as for Hume

and many others, the faculty which drew together the fragmented data of the senses into a patterned image of the world. If imagination is taken as this, then like Coleridge and Hegel, it is easy to account for the experience of art.¹⁴ In effect, imaginative experience is ordinary perception.

There are, however, many problems attached to this popular theory. In especial, it is too easy to say that mundane perception accounts for the aesthetic experience: after all, a major trait of the imagination is its ability to dwell on an imaginary object, one normally thought of as non-existent - for instance, a face in a painting. Uniting ordinary perception and imaginative experience to explain the aesthetic experience leads too often to a reliance on a perception of pure form (intellectual) or pure matter (affective), or the manifold persuasion of 'art-casuistries'.

Pater did not accept this theory of imagination as it informed all of life. In its place he postulated a theory of imagination as a self-conscious act, one where the imagination is manifest only in certain contexts and particular forms of thought, imagery and perception.¹⁵ To Pater, its faculty of creativity allowed the aesthetic experience a unique place in the self's perception of its place in the world. For a mental image thereupon becomes regarded not as an object of attention, but as an active mode of attention; one where the mental object is not treated as given, but rather posited according to the structure of attention accorded it. Such self-conscious perception is characterized by Pater as '"imaginative reason"'. The phrase attempts to describe the active unity of experience and understanding implicit in any aesthetic experience. With regard to painting Pater writes:

to suppose that all is mere technical acquirement in delineation or touch, working through and addressing itself to the intelligence, on the one side, or what may be called literary interest, addressed also to the pure intelligence, on the other: - this is the way of most spectators, and of many critics, who have never caught sight all the time of that true pictorial quality which lies between. (p.103)

It is this 'pictorial quality' that, unbeknown to ourselves, we attend to, but lose by the application of secondary theories post factum, such as that of literary or synaesthetic criticism - 'in its primary

aspect, a great picture has no more definite message for us than an accidental play of sunlight and shadow for a few moments on the wall or floor' (p.104). That 'no more' is defiantly playful (mirroring as it does the playful quality of the aesthetic experience), for such 'accidental play' felt in the aesthetic experience opposes those theories of art and the attempts to subsume the experience under the ideologies of ethics or a type of hedonic calculus, as the constructivist programme was later to do under the concept of functionality. The result is the same -

not the least to blame for the withering of experience is the fact that things under the law of pure functionality, assume a form that limits contact with them to mere operation, and tolerates no surplus, whether in freedom or in autonomy of things, which would survive as the core of experience, because it is not consumed by the moment of action.¹⁶

This 'surplus' is ludique, and in it we find ourselves, not as creatures consumed in the present activity, functional or ethical, but as rational, feeling beings, with memories and expectations.

Pater, then, affirms the primacy of the experience of art; but he goes further, and cites music, with what he saw as its inseparable fusion of form and content, as the type towards which art strives: 'all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.' For a while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it' (p.106). And also the effort of the imaginative reason, for to hear music, to hear it 'move' as dimension, requires an imaginative leap similar to that involved in seeing a painting's 'pictorial quality'. Thus music means especially where there is no way to paraphrase this meaning: being and meaning are recognized as inseparable, and come into and pass out of existence in the felt time of memory and expectation. The effect of the imaginative reason in constructing meaning in this way is similar to the effect of Bergson's durée, although the structure of that 'moving present' is entirely different.¹⁷

Pater deals in 'The School of Giorgione' with the creative side of art - the artist's side, not the spectator's. But for Pater the spectator is always implicated in the same process he ascribes to the artist. The spectator's way of seeing detail is

inseparable from an apprehension of the activity whereby it was produced. Thus the aesthetic interests of artist and spectator coincide: and the work appears inseparable from the way in which it is achieved.

The implications of the statements on music in this essay cast their shadow over the rest of the book. Pater's new view of imagination shows how crude in the epistemological sphere Arnold's dictum is. To say that we must see the thing as it is, is to posit an ideal reality which does not really exist either 'in' the object or ourselves. Instead, as Pater sees it, the existence of the art object is one of polemical becoming, 'an Anders-streben - a partial alienation from its own limitations' (p.105). Here Pater invokes the notion of vital strife derived ultimately from Heraclitus. In the example he quotes of Legros's painting, the absence of the object itself and its intense presence via the artist's unique representation are in eternal conflict. Art then, is not, as in Platonic or Cartesian realism, an imitation of the real, a mendacious, second-hand form. It becomes the more real; just as imagination becomes more important in Pater's theoria because it is not mere 'servile, everyday attentiveness'. Pater extends these imaginative perceptions to 'all things that partake in any degree of artistic qualities' (p.108). Simple gestures may be seen in this light; and the emergence of the imaginative faculty is important in all our experience, for it provides the self with unique patterns through which to understand the world:

often such moments are really our moments of play, and we are surprised at the unexpected blessedness of what may seem our least important part of time; not merely because play is in many instances that to which people really apply their own best powers, but also because at such times, the stress of our servile, everyday attentiveness being relaxed, the happier powers in things without are permitted free passage, and have their way with us. (p.119)

With statements such as these, Pater passes beyond traditional aesthetics and enters his own phenomenology of aesthetics.

But as always, he returns to the concrete: it is the art of Giorgione - 'the inventor of genre, of those easily movable pictures which serve neither for uses of devotion, nor of allegorical or historic teaching' (pp.110-11) - which epitomises for Pater the crucial turning-point in the history of art forms. This form of art, to all practical purposes useless, 'tells itself without an articulated story' by managing to present 'some brief and wholly

concrete moment - into which, however, all the interests and effects of a long history, have condensed themselves, and which seem to absorb past and future in an intense consciousness of the present'(pp.117-18).

It is probably on account of the temporal factor which infuses the new genre that Pater selected Giorgione to exemplify his aesthetic theory. As he realized, once art is separated self-consciously from any practical purpose in life, it becomes acutely conscious of its place in time, and of the passing of time. This idea suffuses the essay: the genre paintings, small and manipulable, are so much more susceptible to the effect of time; they may live with us 'for a day or a lifetime'(p.111); Giorgione's celebrated subject is 'instantaneous motion', and is described in static gerunds; while 'life itself is conceived as a sort of listening - listening to music, to the reading of Bandello's novels, to the sound of water, to time as it flies'(p.119).

The awareness of time is the awareness of the flux of existence for Pater. Because of his unusual theory of aesthetic imagination, where the aesthetic structure of attention is stressed at the expense of ordinary perception, process is emphasized rather than empirical image. Water, music, words in time, all demonstrate by their fluidity the immanent presence of time as loss of time in this theory. It is a situation which generally breeds eschatologies: in Pater's writings, it breeds the nostalgia of which the essay on du Bellay is so powerful as instance, and 'Winckelmann' so extensive an analysis.

It is in the work of du Bellay that Pater finds occasion for his diagnosis of the modern condition of the self. He is a modern figure, one who lived amidst renascent turmoil and influx, and whose championship of the vernacular French marks him as a modern artist. Hence his art, according to Pater, aims at 'the portraiture of his most intimate moods'; and this for du Bellay is a longing for home; yet not so much a longing for a return to

the real France, we may be sure, with its dark streets and roofs of rough-hewn slate, as to that other country, with slenderer towers, and more winding rivers, and trees like flowers, and with softer sunshine on more gracefully proportioned fields and ways, which the fancy of the exile, and the pilgrim, and of the schoolboy far from home, and of those kept at home unwillingly, everywhere builds up before or behind them. (p.139)

Du Bellay's nostalgia is a result of his enforced sojourn in Rome; but Pater expands his homesickness 'as significant of the final regret of all human creatures for the familiar earth and limited sky' (p.138).

It is a universal emotion; and one cognate with periods of change. But its basis is also intimate in Pater, part of his own poésie intime' (p.137). Its source is his intense awareness of the flux of time and existence, which is actually fed and not assuaged by an aesthetic that emphasizes imaginative moments. It is no coincidence that the essay on du Bellay ends on such a moment: 'a sudden light transfigures some trivial thing, a weather-vane, a windmill, a winnowing-fan, the dust in the barn door. A moment - and the thing has vanished, because it was pure effect; but it leaves a relish behind it, a longing that the accident may happen again' (p.140). Such a longing is intensified as the moment of 'bien-être' in artist and spectator is intensified in Pater's aesthetic. But Pater, while keenly interested in nostalgia, is not used by the model in the way that the authors in chapter four are used. The essay only obliquely concerns nostalgia. It also, and most overtly, is about du Bellay, and the clusters of oppositions that are the elusive key to the essay: Greek and Latin against vernacular French, Malherbe against the Pleiad, Rome against La Beauce, the charnel-house against 'birds and flowers and the fancies of pagan mythology' - all stem from this double foci. But in doing so, by thus embedding nostalgia in the essay's structure, Pater is caught in a double-bind. His aesthetic of the imagination perhaps arises from this feeling of homesickness: certainly it feeds it, for Pater is master enough of the longing to turn it into an art that owes little to favour and prettiness. This art assuages the desire temporarily by creating from it something relatively permanent, a composed essay; but it also fans the nostalgic '"chaleur du jour"' by creating of it something more than accidental and fleeting - a permanent locus of feeling. Furthermore, the desire remains because Pater sees it as ineluctably the condition of modern man. In the perpetuum mobile of modern life, its apparently random movement, Pater sought a point of stillness, a space that may be recollected.

Yet however much Pater longed for home and sought the Archimedean point, his art was rarely content to rest in the plaintive tones and self-indulgent sentimentality that afflicts much literature

affected by nostalgia. His longing is, in a sense, artistically earned; and acutely analysed in the terms of the cultural components in each essay. Its catalytic mechanism throughout the book both recalls the Keatsian urn and foreruns the Proustian madeleine. It starts from an artefact and recalls the experience of man in history as an immediate experience in the here and now of all life in time. Thus Pater's own nostalgia is transfigured by those historical occasions which it seeks, thereby creating of itself 'something individual, inventive, unique'(p.137).

If Pater presents his aesthetic most clearly in the prologue to 'The School of Giorgione', it is in the epilogue to 'Winckelmann' that he analyses its occurrence in history and in the modern condition. 'The spiritual forces of the past, which have prompted and informed the culture of a succeeding age, live, indeed, within that culture, but with an absorbed, underground life'(p.158). Uncovering the underground life of the Hellenic culture, and its later 'conscious tradition', Pater locates the origin of art in religion: more specifically, the origin of Greek art in Greek religion. He quickly dispels the notion of Greek religion as all sweetness and light, instead writing that man's religion is 'modified by whatever modifies his life'(p.160). But religion is not as relative a phenomenon as this statement would have it - 'still, the broad foundation, in mere human nature, of all religions as they exist for the greatest number, is a pagan sentiment, a paganism which existed before the Greek religion, and has lingered far onward into the Christian world'(p.160). This sentiment 'measures the sadness with which the human mind is filled'; is 'beset by notions of irresistible natural powers'. It is part of that condition of mind for man in which 'it is with a rush of home-sickness that the thought of death presents itself. He would remain at home forever on the earth if he could'(p.160).

From this fear of death and primal nostalgia springs religion, attaching to itself the earth and the homely 'usages of patriarchal life' - kindling fire, washing, harvest, holidays. Gradually these rituals lose their 'domestic character, and therefore becoming more and more inexplicable with each generation'. Myths enter them, changing their meaning and social place: 'always, the fixed element is the religious observance; the fluid, unfixed element is the myth, the religious conception'(pp.161-2).

As always, Pater dialectically contrasts stillness with motion, centripetal with centrifugal forces: religion becomes a tension between 'the sad Chthonian deities' with their 'mournful mysteries' and 'antinomian mysticism' and the 'Dorian worship of Apollo, rational, chastened, debonair'(p.162). From out of religion art is born with its legacy of both the 'pagan sentiment' and the mythological 'freedom and mobility of the things of the intellect'. In the emerging Greek art, which Winckelmann characterizes as epitomizing Heiterkeit and Allgemeinheit, 'repose' and 'generality', sculpture attained perfection of form within its strict limitations of bland type and static identity(p.170). It mirrored the classical Greek model of selfhood, 'that Hellenic ideal, in which man is at unity with himself'(p.177). Yet this ideal stems only from half its roots - the centrifugal, Apollonian, rational side. The chthonian, Dionysian, centripetal side - older than the Apollonian order, and awaiting its return from an 'underground life' - must be reinstated in the modern world, and finds its place not in the pure Hellenism of Winckelmann, but in the Romantic Hellenism of Goethe. Both men, according to Pater, were concerned with what is 'the eternal problem of culture - balance, unity with one's self', but it is Goethe who realizes that the pure Hellenic ideal is insufficient for the modern, self-conscious epoch. The era is self-conscious; and so is Goethe's Hellenism - it is that of 'a watchful, exigent intellectualism'(p.182) - and the problem for modern art and experience is, 'can the blitheness and universality of the antique ideal be communicated to artistic productions, which shall contain the fulness of the experience of the modern world?'(p.184).

For the condition of modern life has changed radically:

for us, necessity is not, as of old, a sort of mythological personage without us, with whom we can do warfare. It is rather a magic web woven through and through us, like that magnetic system of which modern science speaks, penetrating us with a network, subtler than our subtlest nerves, yet bearing in it the central forces of the world. (p.185)

To Pater, the greatest change in modern life refined itself to this scientific analogy: modern man is bound by the closure of his own bewildering environment. Modern civilization has not freed him from his old fears and longings, once the demesne of religious rites. On the contrary, it has increased them, separated man from his own self, and imprisoned

him in a 'network of law'. The determinism which is the logical outcome of all this - so much more subtle and elusive than the divine determinism of old - must be resisted by art, which can give to the spectator at least 'an equivalent for the sense of freedom' by matching the complexity of life by its own complexity of form (p.185). By doing this, the 'bewildering toils' of necessity become 'the tragic situation, in which certain groups of noble men and women work out for themselves a supreme dénouement' (p.185).

Pater's aesthetic of imaginative perception as outlined in 'The School of Giorgione' certainly provides such an 'equivalent', for it enables the toils of determinism to be seen in an aesthetic manner. The separation between art and life is never clear in The Renaissance, mainly because Pater was concerned to investigate the aesthetic motive in life - for him, the only way to approach aesthetics at all. Through the reflexive aesthetic imagination, the self can project and apprehend multiple possibilities that form its own potentiality. While necessity describes what the self is or has become, possibility depicts what the self is not but might become. The third factor, the dialectical element, is the 'sense of freedom' where necessity and possibility are harmoniously blended. At the end of 'Winckelmann' however, Pater uses the polarities he sets out in Winckelmann's life and art, and his own aesthetic theory of the imagination openly to counter the inauthentic determinism of modern existence. In art, the imagination can encounter equivalents for the 'sense of freedom' in the supple play of pure form which, in its faithful rendering of the complexity of life, can represent this as an aesthetic spectacle for the spectator. Pater's aesthetic imagination demands self-conscious attention paid to its own structure of attention - that is, the person must be conscious of the object and his aesthetic response while simultaneously analyzing both. Similarly in life, to escape the closure of a determined self, we must treat the world as aesthetic spectacle, and by so watching the 'fatal combination' come to see the actual 'entanglement' as a 'tragic situation' leading to a dénouement' (p.185). Art has indeed become the more real.

Treating the world as aesthetic spectacle also accounts for a curious phenomenon one encounters throughout The Renaissance. In each essay it is difficult to distinguish between the artist and

his work: Giorgione appears to us on the same plane of reality as Il Tempesta; Pico as an analogy for the 'creative Logos', and it is peculiarly difficult to prise the historical Michelangelo from his work. In part this is a function of the prose, as we saw in 'Lucca della Robbia'; but the prose style arises from the model of aesthetic selfhood. The result for the reader is curiously oppressive: history turns to art at every touch, and one longs for the smell of the real.

The 'spectator of all existence' is in fact an escape: it is no real resolution of the problems posed by Pater's aesthetic; nor a satisfactory response to the condition of being in the modern era. It is both an explanation and description of the aesthetic self; but as the Conclusion makes manifest, this selfhood is fundamentally therapeutic, despite its aesthetic analyses and debonair challenges.

The movement of the Conclusion's first two paragraphs is chiasmic - as Pater describes it in Marius the Epicurean, 'the sharp apex of the present moment between two hypothetical eternities'.¹⁸ Each of the two paragraphs deals not with possibility or necessity, but with moments, instants of feeling: in the first, physical, and in the second, emotional and intellectual. The point of contact between the two extremes of the chiasmus is water, symbol of the Heraclitean flux. Thus, the 'flood of water in the summer heat' (on the body) corresponds to the 'flood of external objects' (on the mind), and the linking images are the whirlpool of death and dissolution, and the 'eager and devouring' Heraclitean fire of regeneration. The comparison of physical and mental states in flux is continued in the stream image, where the slow decay of the body is contrasted with the mind's incessant apprehension of rushing time. Passing beyond nominalist and conceptualist ideas, Pater conveys the appalling emptiness in the momentary nature of existence by dwelling 'in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them' (p.187). What is 'real in our life', locked as we are in our solitary, subjective 'dream of a world' (Pater refuses to give us even the comfort of the definite article), is nothing but a 'tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream' (p.188).

From the similarity of the metaphors in the Conclusion with Hume's famous definition of the self as a 'bundle of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement', it would appear that Pater here accepts the Humean atomism whereby distinct perceptions are distinct existences.¹⁹ Yet a closer look at the language would persuade us that this is not necessarily the case. Pater accepts the identity of the self for itself: throughout the first two paragraphs there is a subject - 'we' - which is modified by the conditions in which it finds itself. Pater never denied the existence of a known selfhood, whether fragmentary, unified or as self-relation. His special concern lay in how we come to know it; the effect of self-consciousness upon itself; and in the nature and quality of such being.

Having reduced all things, inward and outward, to a single image, Pater now begins, typically, 'where analysis leaves off' to make his reply. In its primary aspect, it is very simple: 'not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end'. Out of context, this sentence is morally ambiguous. But taken in regard to what Pater has just said about philosophical abstractions and the flux of all things, the statement takes on the form of a plea for the original aesthetic experience. The 'fruit of experience' is philosophy, 'speculative culture', metaphysical aesthetics and all other abstract systems of inquiry. Pater instead advocates the primacy of the crucial moment of illumination, when 'some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us' (p.188). That self-conscious instantaneity of perception was for him the only steady element amidst the 'strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves', the deliberate and the accidental processes of both memory and forgetfulness. Pater rejected the concept of experience as an idealized and logicized abstraction from our common everyday perception. That is the concept of experience, not as the awareness of circumstances in which we live and move and have our being, but rather as the pure immediate awareness of a sensory content which, although complicated by retentions and protentions, has no intrinsic reference to any such actual circumstances. (Such a concept of experience has been an integral part of the empiricist tradition since Locke.) Instead,

attention paid to actual experience makes us more aware of our selves as ever-changing structures, built by the imagination from experience.

Thus, the *Τὴν Ὠραίων* proposed in the Preface: 'our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety' (p.xx). As a result, the aesthetic education which gives rise to this process model of selfhood only increases the loneliness of the self, now a windowless and doorless monad, imprisoning it in its own experiences. Pater's aesthetic had eschewed Idealist metaphysics and sought a resolution of the problems of identity and unity elsewhere. But this resolution brought other problems with it. The solipsism of nostalgia was an everpresent threat, one with which Pater grappled; and the figure of the spectator in which his aesthetic is often embodied seems to assume narcissistic traits.

Conclusion

The Renaissance stands as Pater's attempt to create a new model of selfhood, in the terms of aesthetic argument. The argument is embodied in a series of essays, each concentrating on a moment in history, and each advocating the recreation of selfhood through the constant repetition of moments of aesthetic analysis. The object of these moments, historical and aesthetic, is a 'quickened, multiplied consciousness', a 'quickened sense of life' (p.190), and this can only be achieved by a continuous process of self-absorption, an education of the mind and the aesthetic imagination through the senses. Such an education is finely discriminatory - the essays themselves are evidence of this. But in The Renaissance Pater's advocacy of this asceticism is unclear, the boundary of the *μονόχρονος ἡδονῆς* seemingly unfixed, and it is a major flaw in the book. This does not mean that the book could lead readers into immoral lives, a common enough charge in Pater's lifetime. Rather, the motive of ascēsis is confused because we can never be sure if Pater has as his aim the cultivation of physical

satisfactions, or a better knowledge of the art object itself. Just as historical figures seem to become part of their own art in Pater's essays, so these two quite different aims seem to merge and become one. Pater himself does not seem aware of this, and his unawareness at this crucial point must lead us to conclude that he did not see the full consequences of his model of aesthetic self-hood. This is revealed by his use of scientific metaphor to explain the activity of the self who will achieve unity and balance through aesthetic education. To the aesthetic critic, 'his end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others' (p.xxi). As with the magnetic image at the end of 'Winckelmann', Pater uses the scientific image with care: for him, the process of analysis and comparison had to be carried out rigorously. But the concrete aesthetic moment is, after all, only momentary and must be established repeatedly: hence the task of the aesthetic imagination is an unending one, coterminous with life itself - 'the demand of the intellect is to feel itself alive. It must see into the laws, the operation, the intellectual reward of every divided form of culture; but only that it may measure the relation between itself and them' (p.183). Hence, it is no experiment, for an experiment has a definite purpose and object, and also a definite end. The aesthetic experiment has no end. Death closes the story, but brings no plenitude to the quest, being merely one more event in life.

Pater never ceases to measure this relation and its attendant self-consciousness. In spite of and because of his optimistic aesthetic programme, he is absorbed by the unbridgeable distance between his sense of self and all outward things, and held by his nostalgic 'sense of loss in passing days'. These two feelings are the mainspring of the Conclusion, and they are the problems to which the Preface is the answer. In this respect, The Renaissance is a model of Uroboros, the serpent that bites its tail, forming an infinite perfection. The Preface is the - hypothetical - result of the Conclusion's methods, to which the body of the book is the proof. As such, the book's ending leads us back to its beginning: Omega reveals Alpha, and Genesis harbours Revelation. Where the Conclusion presents images of imprisonment and dissolution, the Preface discusses the unity of being and implies the new-found freedom

of the Renaissance; the Preface's Romantic ideals of freedom, unity and harmony become the Conclusion's Victorian - and modern - nightmare of confinement, fragmentation, discord. As such, the form of the book is highly deterministic, the circularity of its argument mirrored in its circle images and the book's own form. It becomes the static Parmenidean sphere, $\nu\tilde{\nu}\nu \epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\nu \omicron\mu\omicron\tilde{\nu} \pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$,²⁰ the circular prison of the self, ringed by itself - a solipsism seminal to modern inauthenticity:

my external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it.²¹

For all the immaculate prose and the intricately worked out ideas on aesthetics and selfhood in the body of the book, the Conclusion represents, in its urgent, directly appealing tone, Pater's deep unease at his own declared position in 'the race of the mid-stream'. It is betrayed by the paragraph which Pater omitted entirely when he took the passages for the Conclusion from the original Morris review (it came before the quotation from Novalis, and after the vividly descriptive two paragraphs on the flux):

such thoughts seem desolate at first; at times, all the bitterness of life seems concentrated in them. They bring the image of one washed out beyond the bar in a sea at ebb, losing even his personality, as the elements of which he is composed pass into new combinations. Struggling as he must, to save himself, it is himself that he loses at every moment.²²

The threat symbolized by this death by water is not allayed by the aesthetic argument of The Renaissance. The process of expanding the 'sursis indéfinis' only led to a more acute and nightmarish awareness of the interval's fleetingness, and a steady diminution of any clear sense of tradition in the past. His subject-matter in The Renaissance supports this, for it nearly always concerns period of flux and transition; all is interruption and rupture; everything breaks off. The dilemma is not so much empiricist as phenomenological in origin: 'the moment is the sole reality, it is reality in itself, in the life

of the soul. The Moment that has been lived is the Last, the Warm-blooded, the Immediate, the Living, the Bodily-Present, the Totality of the Real, the only Concrete Thing'.²³

Such a concern is an epoché of sorts, an act of reduction with which the phenomenological analysis begins - in Paterian terms, a suspension of judgment. By this means, the aesthetic self stands at an Archimedean point outside of time and of experience, a point of Absolute Zero. But this is impossible, even by Pater's own admission, for the terms and meanings of his description of vécu can hold good only within that lived experience. Pater is guilty of contradicting his cardinal principle of truth to experience; and indeed, his insistence on the centrality of the moment does not strengthen his model of aesthetic selfhood, but weakens and imprisons it. The aesthetic - derived from the verb αἰσθάνομαι, which in its sense of observation is related to both 'theory' and 'theatre' - offers a dramatic spectacle of the mind as its own protagonist. But the result is a narcissistic mirroring, with no dialectical movement or transcendence. Abelard may be a symbol of freedom, for instance; yet the sense of enclosure that is undeniably present when reading the essay stems from Pater's treatment of him as a fictional figure such as Aucassin. Histoire becomes histoire. Under these conditions, the 'core of experience' is never a 'surplus', ludique and aesthetic, for it is always 'consumed by the moment of action'.²⁴ What Pater seeks above all is thus lost to him by his own method. The Renaissance is undeniably a powerful and bewitching book; but it is also confused and despairing. Both the power and the despair stem directly from a model of aesthetic selfhood that is, as we have seen, deeply flawed, but still capable of seduction. The book's confusion and its claustrophobic atmosphere are effects of Pater's misunderstanding of his adopted model.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. Letters of Walter Pater, ed. by Lawrence Evans (Oxford, 1970), p.30 (Letter 47).
2. Westminster Review, XCIX (April 1873), pp.639-41, p.640.
3. The Renaissance, op.cit., p.xix. Further references to this edition are included in the text after quotations.
4. Lionel Johnson, op.cit., p.41.
5. See, for example, David Hume, 'Of the Standard of Taste', in Essays Moral, Political and Literary (London, 1741), and S.N. Hampshire, 'Logic and Appreciation', in Aesthetics and Language, edited by W. Elton (Oxford, 1954).
6. Dieter Henrich, 'Between Kant and Hegel: Post Kantian Idealism - An Analysis of its Origins, Systematic Structures and Problems' (Lectures delivered at Harvard University, Spring 1973, edited by S. Dunning, D. Pacini and C. Ream).
7. (Princeton, 1974), pp.243-44.
8. pp. 1, 3, 5, 6, 19, 20.
9. Pater gives two derivations for the word's root - in 'Pico della Mirandola', p.28, and in Plato and Platonism, New Library Edition (London, 1910), p.58.
10. Appreciations, New Library Edition (London, 1910), p.18.
11. Plato and Platonism, op.cit., p.150.
12. See David J. DeLaura, 'Arnold's Imaginative Reason: The Oxford Sources and the Tradition', Prose Studies, 1800-1900, 1, no.1 (1977), pp.7-18.
13. 'The Transcendental Deduction of the Categories', in The Critique of Pure Reason. See also Mary Warnock, Imagination, (London, 1976), Parts I and II.
14. S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (London, 1817), vol. I, chapter XIII. G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on Aesthetics, translated by T.M. Knox (London, 1975), passim.
15. This is close to Sartre's theory of the imagination as it is presented in L'Imaginaire (Paris, 1940).
16. Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia, translated by E.F.N. Jephcott (London, 1974), p.40.
17. Henri Bergson, Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience (Paris, 1889), p.76.
18. Marius the Epicurean, his Sensations and Ideas, 2 vols., New Library Edition (London, 1910), I, p.146.
19. British Empirical Philosophers: Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Reid and J.S. Mill, ed. by A.J. Ayer and Raymond Winch (London, 1952), p.484.

20. Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary and Critical Essays, translated and ed. by Leonardo Tarán (Princeton, 1965), I.5., p.82. The essays are full of circular images. To Pico della Mirandola, for instance, the world is 'like that map or system of the world, held, as a great target or shield, in the hands of the creative Logos' (p.32). Later on in this essay, Pater describes the cultural mythology of the Italian Renaissance as the 'anemone with its concentric rings of strangely blended colour, still to be found by those who search long enough for it'. As Donald L. Hill hints on p.331, this flower may well be Pater's own symbolic fiction.
21. F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, op.cit., p.306.
22. Westminster Review, XXXIV (October, 1868), pp.300-12, p.310.
23. Karl Jaspers, Psychology of World Views (London, 1919), quoted in A.D. Nuttall, A Common Sky: Philosophy and the Literary Imagination (London, 1974), p.220. In a passage that was removed from the periodical version of 'The School of Giorgione' when it was re published in The Renaissance, Pater illustrates all too clearly the hypostatization of time, and the escape into art - two open indications of his struggle with nostalgic and narcissistic leitmotifs:

who, in some such perfect moment, when the harmony of things inward and outward beat itself out so truly, and with a sense of receptivity, as if in that deep accord, with entire inaction on our part, some messenger from the real soul of things must be on his way to one, has not felt the desire to perpetuate all that, just so, to suspend it in every particular circumstance, with the portrait of just that one spray of leaves lifted just so high against the sky, above the well, for ever? - a desire how bewildering with the question whether there be indeed any place wherein these desirable moments take permanent refuge. Well! in the school of Giorgione you drink water, perfume, music, lie in receptive humour thus for ever, and the satisfying moment is assured. (pp.241-2)
24. Adorno, op.cit., p.40.

CHAPTER SIX THE SYMPATHETIC SELF

Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben
Der täglich sie erobern muss!

— Faust, op.cit., lls.11575-6.

Marius the Epicurean His Sensations and Ideas

In a failed novel we often feel that there is someone talking not onstage, but offstage; and we resent this as a clumsy intrusion. We sense it as the author's voice, authoritative and tactless, breaking the rules of his own game and blundering into the holy circle of narrative from secular life outside. In Marius the Epicurean this feeling of someone talking behind the scenes is endemic. More than that, the reader is given the sense in this novel that the centre of the circle is on the outside of the circle, further back and infinitely further back, as if the outside were this centre which can only be absence of centre. It is at first glance a curious metaphor to describe the prose of Marius - eminently there - but it is one that Pater himself uses, and which describes the investigation carried out in the novel of the relation between the self one is and the self which writes at least as well as the mask metaphor initiated by Henry James, George Moore, Arthur Symonds and Edmund Gosse.¹

We have seen that Pater does not write impersonal essays; and it ought to be no surprise that his fiction is heedless of the usual canons of impersonality in the novel. The general dictum of impersonality is imperative: an author must not overtly muse, comment or moralize, but sit back and appear to trim his fingernails. The reason for this is twofold. What is narrated is adjudged to have aesthetic value only as the interest it arouses is uninvolved. The aesthetic judgment here - one that stretches beyond Kant to Aristotle - implies that the aesthetic process, in arousing a justifiable interest, must not derive from personal involvement. From this it follows that the work of art is self-sufficient in that it is contained by another reality within reality.

Pater is clearly not party to this aesthetic, in practice or theory. His remarks in 'The School of Giorgione' on the formal qualities of art may seem to assent to it, but actually they lead in a different direction, as we have seen. In his fiction Pater does not occasionally ignore the rules of non-intervention - he talks incessantly to the reader throughout the narrative, quite openly, and without regard for the unities of place or time. These interventions - if so pervasive an element in Pater's prose could be termed such - do not consist of moral judgments, taking sides against a character or assuming the creator's prerogative to touch up his creations as he pleases. It is the intervention of a narrator questioning the nature of narrative as a circle closed in upon itself.

There is in fact no centre of novelistic narrative in Marius the Epicurean. Marius the ostensive hero reacts hardly at all to private vicissitude, only to a milieu which is presented to himself and presented for him as a set of ahistorical philosophical alternatives - Stoicism, Cyrenaicism, Numa, Christ, Spinoza, Bruno, Montaigne, Goethe, Hegel. Birth opens and death closes the story, but the novel is no Bildungsroman in the manner of Wilhelm Meister or David Copperfield. Having debated or made trial, undertaken journeys, sought exile, no definite commitment results; and the very presence of the hero's vita activa is deliberately muted. What is present instead for the reader is an acute awareness of the relation between creator and creation, Pater and Marius, which realizes itself in the hypostatized nature of the various narrative devices Pater employs: the diary form in chapter twenty-five; the conte fabliau of Eros and Psyche; the dialogue between Lucian and Hermotimus. All of these are distinctly autonomous forms embedded within the novel's structure, but annealed to it by the uniform style and tone of the rest of the text. Like the interventions of the narrator, and the sizeable quotations from other authors, other forms, far from being mere literary appliqués, act as fundamentally critical interventions, without appearing openly so. Flaubertian impersonality asserted the narrative's supple capability: to tell a story was to portray characters without concern for the limitations and nature of narrative. For Pater, it is not so simple. To such a self-conscious writer, whose themes were so scattered, the closed circle of the impersonal narrative was too straitening, and the assumed innocence as to its own origin, too bland. Instead, he attempts to open the circle

without breaking it, by revealing rather than veiling the mauvais fois of the narrator, and by playing upon expectations of the rules held by the reader - hence the different narrative types in Marius. Such diversity from narrative norms is Pater's Spielraum, re-creating for us an innocence at one remove, the innocence of non-innocence. Aesthetic non-intervention is thus abolished by a narrative consciousness that is its own subject but which, in the more traditional impersonal novel, vanished between the lines. Telling stories does present problems, principally because the teller is the focal point from which the narrative stretches.

In Marius the teller is no one point, but is everywhere and therefore nowhere. Nor is the technique definable by a simply omniscient author. The narrative loss of centre is a verbum infans² (literally 'mystic'), is symptomatic of the innocence of non-innocence, of a model of selfhood where the self is conscious of its loss of unified and continuous selfhood, not in associationist atomism, but in its own ceaseless syntheses, its 'perpetual weaving and unweaving'.

This process of weaving and unweaving takes place in time: it takes time, as the Conclusion demonstrated. The same almost morbid sense of time is present in Marius. Living in time, our life is temporal; we live time, the verbal phrase and noun are inseparable. Pater's distrust of metaphysics goes deeper than a dislike of abstractions. Traditionally, metaphysics deals warily with time. The inquiry into knowledge and being is a search for the Absolute, that which stands eternal inside or outside the flux. Pater rejected the grounds of this quest: for him, being is temporal, saturated nor merely in history but in the finitude of a certain span of time, and therefore intimately related to death. He diagnosed the error of metaphysical thinking in its treatment of Ideal Being as a sort of eternal presentness outside of time. For Pater, being was inescapably temporal, rooted in finite things, metaphorizing its experience in terms of the world around itself.

Thus Apuleius offers Marius a mild doctrine of the Platonic Ideas informing sensible things, of intermediate beings by which men may speak to the gods. Marius is attracted, then wary: 'to indulge but for an hour fantasies, fantastic visions of that sort, only left the actual world more lonely than ever... For himself, it was

clear, he must still hold by what his eyes really saw'.³ Again, as Cornelius Fronto charms him with his 'select communion of just men made perfect', he finds his thought passing 'in search of its visible locality': 'where might Marius search for all this, as more than an intellectual abstraction? Where were those elect souls... in the actual order he saw... Where was that comely order, to which as a great fact of experience he must give its due'. Meaning comes literally as visualization: he sees the Urbs Beata, its 'visible locality and abiding-place, the walls and towers of which, so to speak, he might really trace and tell'(II, pp.11-12). And the advent of Cyrenaicism for Marius is heralded by his imagining the 'brilliant Greek colony' hung 'between the mountains and the sea, among richer than Italian gardens... in a delightful climate, with something of transalpine temperance amid its luxury, and withal in an inward atmosphere of temperance'(I, p.134).

Meaning is eminently visual, aesthetic, for Marius; but in a precise fashion. Marius cannot assent to the traditional concupiscentia oculorum of philosophers, their Platonic obsession with 'seeing' the essence of being without experiencing it. This type of seeing consigns experience to the oblivion of subjectivism, makes abstracted, metaphorized thought the sole vehicle of being, and denies the concrete, temporal world. Pater eschews this vision, offering instead his theory of 'imaginative reason' - reason informed by the senses, conjoint with the aesthetic imagination. It is in Marius that we find the full implication of the theory analyzed and embodied.

Pater's theory of aesthetic imagination, so crucial yet confused and flawed in The Renaissance is given sounder grounds in Marius, grounds which subtly shift emphases in the theory and change the model of aesthetic selfhood. This is first evident in the opposition of the descriptions of Marius's home and his early life there to his later 'Epicurean speculations', where the sense of 'Epicurean' is nicely defined according to its original meaning. Thus, Marius's 'early much cherished religion of the villa' is 'a religion of usages and sentiment rather than of fact and belief', and one full of maternal qualities (I, pp.4-6). White-nights comes to be for him 'the concrete outline to a peculiar ideal of home, which throughout the rest of his life he seemed, amid many distractions of spirit, to be ever seeking to regain'(I, p.22). It becomes the spatial locus for his nostalgia, symbolized by Domiduca and inhabited by

the dead who, deprived of their due service, 'would be heard wandering through the house, crying sorrowfully' (I, p. 11). It is this acute sense of the past, 'still a living, united, organic whole' (I, p. 102) that keeps him 'serious and dignified amid the Epicurean speculations which in after years much engrossed him' (I, p. 18). This ascēsis is deepened in the episode at the temple of Aesculapius, where the 'dream of the great sallow snake' and the 'utterance of the young priest' are contrasted: both made him 'revolt with unfaltering instinct from the bare thought of an excess in sleep, or diet, or even in matters of taste, still more from any excess of a coarser kind' (I, p. 34).

Later, when he goes to school, Marius becomes aware that there are 'two possible leaders of his spirit': one the centripetal values of home, the other 'proposing to him unlimited self-expansion in a world of various sunshine' (I, p. 44). The choice is reflected in Pater's choice of colour imagery. Almost everything connected with home in the first two chapters is white - Marius's soul is described to him by his mother as 'a white bird' (I, p. 22); the villa itself is called White-nights - 'Ad Vigilias Albas' - and, in accordance with the Apollonian stasis of centripetal values, Pater interprets the name as meaning 'nights of not quite blank forgetfulness, but passed in continuous dreaming, only half veiled by sleep' (I, p. 14). Contrasted with white is the 'peculiar colour-world' of the seamen's families in Pisa, and the blue fields and sea. It is, in effect, a choice between a self longing for the limited unity of boyhood in the villa, and attracted by the kaleidoscopic variegation of life beyond, its unlimited expansion. This has its analogue in 'Winckelmann', of course, where nostalgia for the earth becomes the primal basis of all religion. Yet nostalgia for home, one of Pater's principal themes, is not merely dismissed in Marius, as we shall see. It embodies, after all, 'a vivid sense of the value of mental and bodily sanity' (I, p. 41); and under its influence Marius becomes 'unworldly', 'umbratilis'; he takes a 'mystic enjoyment' in 'abstinence', 'self-control and ascēsis' (I, p. 25).

These qualities, and the changes made to the theory of aesthetic imagination, are embodied in the reinterpretation of the status of pleasure that takes place in the first two Parts of Marius. Words such as 'aesthetic', 'temperament', 'epicurean' are notoriously double-edged - '"question-begging terms"', as Pater calls them (I, p. 151) - implying

the élitist predilections of the connoisseur (an attitude which is satirized in chapter twenty). Pater is more than usually scrupulous in his use of these terms and, as with his use of the term 'mystic', makes a distinction between the etymological meaning and the modern connotations of the words. Thus, in the context of Marius's researches into Epicureanism and Cyrenaicism, it is pointed out that aesthetic pleasure is not just a form of pleasure, but nor is its connection with pleasure merely accidental. The confusion arises because of a

reasoning, which began with a general term, comprehensive enough to cover pleasures so different in quality, in their causes and effects, as the pleasures of wine and love, of art and science, of religious enthusiasm and political enterprise, and of that taste or curiosity which satisfied itself with long days of serious study. (I, p.151)

To say that an aesthetic experience is pleasant could imply that one takes pleasure in the experience, as though it were the experience, rather than its object, that constituted the focus of his attention. The aesthetic pleasure offered by Pater's aesthetic imagination here, however, is of a different order. It is founded on understanding; has an object and not just a cause - 'not pleasure, but fulness of life, and "insight" as conducting to that fulness' (I, p.151). The pleasure of aesthetic experience is inseparable from the act of attention to its object: it is not mere sensation such as sexual or gustatory pleasure, which hardly demands an intellectual act. It is not so much an effect of its object as a mode of understanding it.

This is a point central to the structure of Marius and its model of selfhood, for such understanding through pleasure leads inevitably to a reconsideration of the place of taste in aesthetic affairs. Taste is not the trivialized choice cultivation of connoisseurs; it is simply knowing why an object attracts or repels one. It becomes in the novel 'far more than a mental attitude or manner. A magnificent intellectual force is latent within it'.⁴ The exercise of taste and the transfiguration of experience by the aesthetic imagination are in fact identical, for taste involves deliberation, comparison, reflexive attention. This is illustrated in chapter nine, 'New Cyrenaicism' - 'really, to the phase of reflection through which Marius was then passing, the charge of "hedonism", whatever its true weight might be, was not properly applicable at all' (I, p.151). Marius, absorbed by the demands of παιδεία (I, p.157) and 'that taste or curiosity which satisfied itself with long days of serious study' was concerned with

the claims of these concrete and actual objects on his sympathy, his intelligence, his senses - to 'pluck out the heart of their mystery', and in turn become the interpreter of them to others: this had now defined itself for Marius as a very narrowly practical design: it determined his choice of a vocation to live by. (I, p.152).

De gustibus non est disputandum - but the matter is far more complex than the facile subjectivism of the tag would have us believe. Preference, after all, is the result of thought and education; is expressive of ethical and religious, not to mention political feelings; is as much a part of one's rational nature as are scientific judgments; and constitutes much of our identity, for ourselves and others. Above all, taste is 'practical' - theoretic taste, like abstract metaphysics, was meaningless for Pater - and is the motive for Marius's researches in Cyrenaicism.

Marius becomes a writer in prose, though we are never told of his productions. Nevertheless, his thoughts on style are an extension of the qualities of taste and expression: 'virile apprehension of the true nature of things, of the true nature of one's own impression, first of all! - words would follow that naturally, a true understanding of one's self being ever the first condition of genuine style' (I, p.155). This applies to Pater's oeuvre as well, of course. Such a style is concerned not with mythos but dianoia, not with actions but attitudes; and with relations that are paradigmatic rather than syntagmatic. Its principal quality is its circularity - a rounding upon itself in each book, a dwelling upon the same subjects. It also applies to the quality of Pater's prose, which exhibits the same curious loss of centre defined in reference to Flavian's prose as 'the "labour of the file"... enriching the work by far more than the weight of precious metal it removed' (I, pp.97-98).

In her stylistic analysis of a passage from Marius, Vernon Lee makes an acute criticism of this circularity when she illustrates 'how long Pater carries an item in consciousness by showing how long he expects his reader to carry it', and goes on suggestively to compare this kind of creative memory to 'that of a composer dealing in long modulations'. She continues: 'perhaps this retentiveness is itself a mark of insufficient locomotion, of a tendency to circle round the same items and weave them closer together rather than to string them clearly in rows or dispose them in definite logical patterns'.⁵ Although the conclusions she draws are dubious, Vernon Lee's observations

here concerning the recurring sense of déjà entendu are acute. Pater's prose is a strict language whose purpose is not merely to describe things, actions or purposes but to construct the specific space of language which in mundane conversation as well as in literary prose, we tend to reduce to a simple surface traversed in a uniform, irreversible movement. Pater restores depth to this space. A sentence is not merely projected linearly: it opens out; alludes at different levels to its own and other texts, though not according to common logic - the logic of subordination, of genus et species - which destroys the space and standardizes the movement.

Pater's 'retentiveness' is in fact protension: certain key words, used in different contexts, carry the core of the argument, and the argument can often be advanced only by reading backwards into the text. It is an ancient poetic technique, employed by Lucretius for instance, and one that the later Heidegger uses in his arcane and densely allusive prose. It lends to Pater's prose curious temporal qualities. His writings seem to be both frozen in a blank static virtuality, and imbued with a remarkable temporal discontinuity as foreign to eternal permanence as it is to quotidian duration, now anticipating, now recalling, now assuming an appearance of presentness. The narrative result of this is a technique that denies the basic linguistic categories of assertion or denial. Pater tells, without stating what is and without refuting it either; and the impression this leaves the reader with is one of an indefinite lack or loss. Indeed, Pater would probably have been sympathetic to the aim of Heidegger's device of using crossed-out words to signify without directly naming.

It is strategic, of course. Style for Pater, being a product of the aesthetic imagination and taste, is a function of the self; and it is important to realize that in Marius this equation precedes, indeed is sometimes inconsistent with, 'the μόνοχρονος ἡδονή of Aristippus' (I, p.154). Creation includes, but necessarily passes beyond, mere observation of the moments, being partly a wish to find and leave behind one a permanent ground to one's experience. Similarly, the varieties of Cyrenaicism are not the source of Marius's education in taste so much as the most amenable vehicle for it. Marius gradually comes to see that they do indeed present him with 'a very narrowly practical design' (my underlining),

which may actually retard his efforts to attain to some sort of unity of selfhood in a fluctuating world. This is illustrated in the novel through the relation between Marius and Marcus Aurelius. As always, very little actual communication takes place. Instead, the reader is given an ironic relation, one to the other, of each other's 'ideas and sensations'; a silent reading of minds and public gestures and private diaries.

In the figure of the emperor Marius is presented with the paradox of one who set out with identical premises but who reached diametrically opposed conclusions. The emperor's stoicism becomes a gauge for Marius with which to measure the 'economy' of his own philosophy. He admits the validity of the emperor's system - giving his approval especially to Aurelius's asceticism - while realizing that he could never assent to its 'sacrifice of the body to the soul' (I, p. 191); and at the end of chapter thirteen sees as its main trait 'a sentiment of mediocrity, though of a mediocrity for once really golden' (I, p. 229).

However, when he sees Aurelius at the Games Marius revises his opinion. The emperor's tolerance and stoical indifference he comes to see as moral weakness: 'surely Aurelius must be lacking in that decisive conscience at first sight, of the imitations of which Marius could entertain no doubt - which he looked for in others' (I, p. 241). Marius's 'light' does not fail him regarding the basic conflict of good and evil here: 'yes! what was needed was the heart that would make it impossible to witness all this' (I, p. 242). His 'implicit epicureanism', just as much as his conscience, made the scene repellant; but although Marius has an innate sense of sin, he has no equivalent deep sense of goodness. He is repelled by the Games; unlike his mysterious friend Cornelius who is impelled by the values of Christianity to absent himself from them.

Marius, then, passes the first major test of his Epicurean values. But his reaction to a stronger, more positive attack on the position he has adopted is entirely different. Fronto's lecture, we are told, 'had the effect of an utterance adroitly designed for him' (II, p. 6). He takes its message to heart, and begins to suspect that there is no place in his Epicureanism for the values of the old morality of the villa. Marius is slowly coming to a realization of the contradictions and infinite regresses implicit in the new

Cyrenaicism. It relies on relativism, yet denies this by rejecting the possibility of - in Marius's case - the validity of the principles of the old morality on the grounds of their dogmatism. And while it starts by surrendering selfhood to the ebb and flow of an expansive flux, he comes to recognize that it inevitably narrows the design of experience. For the present moment comes to assume proportions that block the past's flow into the future, creating of itself a static everpresent, a timeless zone in which being appears temporally everpresent, no longer obedient to the universal laws of decay - a truly 'mystic now', in the etymological sense (I,p.154). For Marius, 'that brilliant road he travelled on, through the sunshine' (I,p.165) is darkened by the sudden immanence of death at one point; and he realizes that his 'elaborate philosophy had not put beneath his feet the terror of mere bodily evil; much less of "inexorable fate, and the noise of greedy Acheron"' (I,p.166). Epicurean philosophies speak of how to live; but are silent about how to die. Confronting death, Marius becomes aware of the false temporality he has been living - as if he were immortal - and its element of escape, 'like a child's running away from home' (I,p.165). In spite of the kaleidoscopic expansion of the self's possibilities, ultimately this model leads back to the static prison-escape regress of the Conclusion.

It is significant that, after Marius's realization of Epicureanism's faulty economy in 'Second Thoughts', the subsequent chapter deals with a form of 'Beata Urbs'. The words imply a utopian vision generally - Plato's Republic, St. Augustine's City of God, More's Utopia - but have a more mystical connotation. In Marius the term has the specific sense of illumination or momentary vision that translates propositions de monde into propositions de sens - in this context, a vision belonging to the emperor. As always with Pater, the setting is symbolic. Aurelius is seated alone in the large and emptied palace apartments, reading in Plato's Republic 'those passages which describe the life of the philosopher-kings' (II,p.36). He seeks out his vision of 'a reasonable, a divine order, not in nature, but in the condition of human affairs - that unseen Celestial City, Uranopolis, Callipolis, Urbs Beata - in which... there would be... no more quite hopeless death, of men, or children, or of their affections' (II,p.39). He finds his vision, but cannot enter it fully. His transcendental moment of illumination in which universal

love is triumphant and death defeated, belongs to Christianity, and he does not possess the iconic language with which to articulate it. Aurelius is thus barred from the beatific vision he strains so hard to attain.

This is the first and last time that Aurelius is presented so intimately to us outside of the judgments Marius makes upon him. Significantly, Marius himself totally misreads the intensity of the situation just conveyed to us, 'fancying the thoughts of the emperor occupied at the moment with the famous prospect towards the Alban hills, from those lofty windows' (II, p.40). Aurelius is indeed gazing towards a 'wide expanse of landscape', 'a possible open country', but it lies in his mind (II, p.36). Marius underestimates the emperor at this point, and his judgment casts light on both persons. Aurelius is no longer the archetypal stoic philosopher-king to the reader (he uses Plato's text merely as a spring-board for his own Beata Urbs); his 'generosity of spirit' here is the positive side of the golden mediocrity of chapter thirteen and of that negative indifference to evil which Marius notes in the Circus. The two extreme qualities are interdependent. His generosity of spirit and power of imagination owe their development to the stoically self-induced blindness at the Games precisely because the vision is to Aurelius a form of escape - albeit temporary - from the sordid duties of rulership.

Marius's misunderstanding, on the other hand, stems from a narrowness of outlook, a lack of Aurelius's 'generosity of spirit' (II, p.40). To his still active Cyrenaicism - another type of escape, as he comes to realize - the beatific state of vision is to be attained and experienced only on the level of sense perception - through, for instance, the 'famous prospect towards the Alban hills'. In a kind of chiasmus then, Marius's failure here illustrates the negative qualities of his position, where his Circus judgment brought out its positive virtues. That judgment was dependent not on the tenets of Cyrenaic philosophy, but upon Marius's 'implicit epicureanism' tempered by the old morality.

While Marius is misconstruing Aurelius's thoughts, what we are given to see in the emperor's temperament is, on one level, 'a very abstract speculation upon the impassive, universal soul - that circle whose centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere' (II, pp.41-2). It is significant that this image appears at the moment of vision; for it is at such moments that the centre cannot be described, and is

in effect an absence or loss of centre. Vision, normally the most eloquent of the senses, becomes in these privileged moments speechless, a verbum infans, as indeed it comes to be for Marius. For us, however, the circumference of the narrative is pushed back to reveal an emperor less than golden, and nearer to Marius than he will know.

Yet Marius does gain some intimation of Aurelius's true thoughts. Through his reading of Aurelius's meditations he discovers his 'theoria' to be 'the secret of passing, naturally, and with no violence to his thought, to and fro' between the old morality and 'the impassive, universal soul! Again, etymological torsion provides meaning - this theoria is for the emperor 'a view, an intuition, of the most important facts, and still more important possibilities, concerning man in the world'(II,p.45). From the first, he had seemed to Marius a man 'of two lives'. Now he realizes that Aurelius possessed 'a soul for which conversation with itself was a necessity of existence'(II,p.46). To Marius, a practitioner of 'strenuous self-consciousness', the idea is instantly recognizable; and Pater characterizes it by pointing up its 'mystic, inward' qualities, which he sets against the 'external and objective habit of life' of the old classic soul(II,p.47). This inward conversation becomes an extension of the 'Logos, the reasonable spark' in man to a dialogue with an Other, a 'divine companion', and is a key element in Marius's own vision (II,pp.47, 48).

That such a dialogue can take place at all for Aurelius is a matter of will. Living in an essentially hopeless pagan world, an 'intellectual museum', he attempts to ease his discontent, at least temporarily, through a vision of the Platonic philosopher-king, which he reaches towards through a conscious effort of will. This effort of free will belongs to the positive aspect of his Stoicism, and as we might expect, it plays a crucial role in his vision of Beata Urbs: '"it is in thy power to think as thou wilt: The essence of things is in thy thoughts about them: All is opinion, conception"'(II,p.38). Aurelius, by a 'conscious effort of will' makes 'discreet, systematic use of the power of imaginative vision'(II,p.38). This is implicit in the image of the emperor gazing out of the 'lofty windows'. Aurelius himself, we are told in chapter thirteen, had these windows cut out of the walls(I,p.216). As the narrative notes, this was an innovation in the domestic architecture of the day. These windows

contrast with the 'little glazed windows' of the 'uppermost chamber' in Marius's old home, which 'framed each its dainty landscape', recalling that early type of morality(I,p.20); and they parallel the actual, visionary landscape seen by Marius at the temple of Aesculapius - 'what he saw was like the vision of a new world, by the opening of some unsuspected window in a familiar dwelling-place' (I,p.40).

The incident serves as a symbol of Aurelius's will in creating his vision of the New Rome - a vision, however, he can see but dimly. The 'inherent liberty' of his mind, for which he finds evidence in the very fact of a self-induced vision, is an ally in the speculative dilemma of Chance or Providence. Aurelius remains at this point, and his dilemma remains, significantly, unresolved. He is able to postulate a 'provident soul', but he cannot really feel it with the imaginative reason. It is a 'confused place' for him; his vision is flawed(II,p.40). This is indicated clearly in chapter nineteen, where Marius sees Aurelius in his suit of armour, setting out for war on the Danube frontier: 'he looked out baffled, labouring, moribund'(II,p.59). The suit of armour, symbolically, is the only inherited object that Aurelius does not auction from the Palace collections. It represents all that Aurelius can and cannot do, is and is not. Bearing in mind the Hercules references on the same page, the emperor's 'labour' is a Shirt of Nessus upon him; and the reference to the armour of Achilles must bring to mind a comparison with that hero's choice. Moreover Aurelius's armour, significantly commissioned by his Stoic predecessor, Hadrian, contrasts strongly in its heavy solidity and crude function with 'that eternal process of nature, of which at a later time Goethe spoke as the "living Garment", whereby God is seen of us, ever in weaving at the "Loom of Time"'(I,p.129). Aurelius will be apotheosized at his death; but his life is spent in defence not merely of the empire, but of his own conception of selfhood against 'that eternal process of nature' which works through the 'quite hopeless death, of men, or children, or their affections'. In this context, Aurelius's panoply is in stark contrast to the armour of Cornelius, of which Marius feels that 'every object of his knightly array had seemed to be but sign or symbol of some other thing far beyond it'(I,p.233).

Although he reads the emperor's meditations, Marius still

believes that the reason for Aurelius's straining towards vision lies in his 'tolerance of evil' and his misuse of his free will in the 'temper of the suicide' - '"thou canst leave this prison when thou wilt"' (II, p. 54). He does not realize how close Aurelius's struggle against false temporality approximates to his own. Nevertheless, the emperor's thoughts on will provide the illuminating core of his own vision, in chapter nineteen.

The vision that Marius experiences stems from an unaccountable feeling of well-being - 'the possession of his own best and happiest self' (II, p. 62) - after a vague dream of a New Rome. 'And why could he not hold such serenity of spirit ever at command?' Marius passes beyond this to the crucial question, 'might the will itself be an organ of knowledge, of vision?' (II, p. 65). Marius is seeking here not only for a method of prolonging that 'possession' indefinitely, but of raising it to the level of a vision. Clearly, he is passing beyond the narrow frontiers of Cyrenaicism. The perfection of vision, not the perfection of every moment as it passes, is what Marius now feels is the aim of his life. It can only be achieved through the resolution of all the antinomian and self-conscious elements in his temperament. Pater makes it clear that he implies theological and psychological as well as metaphysical values in the terms 'vision' and 'will'; and he speculates on whether 'the life of Beatific Vision be indeed possible, if philosophy really "concludes in an ecstasy"' (II, p. 57). For Pater, philosophy began and ended in the actual experience of the human condition.

As we might expect, landscape is the outward sign of Marius's inner grace. The air, 'pure and thin', is said to restore the whiteness of ivory (the youthful Aurelius's dream was that he had shoulders of ivory); and the waterfall explicitly symbolizes the perfected balance of stasis and motion. As in Tennyson's description of the Lotos-Eaters's land, and Yeats's borrowing from this for the second stanza of 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', the atmosphere is pointedly narcotic and paradisiacal.⁶ Colour is noticeably absent, white predominates; and this, together with intervals of sharp, brief syntax (the sentences beginning at 'in his deepest...', for instance) serves to give the illusion of time and the processes of decay being transcended - a feeling that is not conveyed at Aurelius's incomplete vision.

In every aspect of his vision Marius goes beyond the limitations of his age. Aurelius's separate 'two lives' become merged in Marius; and in his mind the doppelgänger is slowly transformed into 'those divinations of a living and companionable spirit at work in all things' (II, p. 68). Marius is able to pierce the farther edge of pagan philosophy, a 'Great Ideal', equivalent to that of Plato or Aristotle. He becomes conscious of his self-consciousness, and achieves certainty of selfhood by passing through the 'flammanitia moenia mundi: the flaming ramparts of the world' (I, p. 134). Aristippus of Cyrene 'left off in suspense of judgment' in front of these ramparts, and indeed, in spite of its 'vast ... accumulation of intellectual treasure', the age of Marcus Aurelius was 'completely disabused of the metaphysical ambition to pass beyond "the flaming ramparts of the world"' (I, p. 145). Marius is able now, with the full assent of his intensely self-conscious selfhood, to transcend the Cyrenaic emphasis on fleeting existence, the refined feelings of the moment; and finds himself moving towards a conception 'of the material fabric of things as but an element in a world of thought - as a thought in a mind than of mind as an element, or accident, or passing condition in a world of matter' (II, pp. 69-70). Marius's identity is now inverted: his centre is his circumference, and his soul is felt as expanding beyond his body (II, p. 70). No longer are things merely thoughts in his mind. He is now a thought in a greater mind; he no longer possesses his self but is possessed by it. It is then that the 'close, impassable prison-wall' of the Conclusion dissolves away, and Marius experiences his vision of the New Rome (II, p. 70).

Marius experiences his vision, then, in terms of the ancient mystical figure of centre and circumference; and the significance of this is apparent in the pantheist tradition of which the figure is representative. In chapter seven of Gaston De Latour Pater discusses the pantheism of Giordano Bruno in microcosmic and macrocosmic images of centre and periphery.⁷ As the figure suggests, the theory's 'more immediate corollary was the famous axiom of "indifference", of "the coincidence of contraries"'. Hence, 'the differences of things, those distinctions... would be lost in the length and breadth of the philosophic survey: nothing, in itself, being really either great or small; and matter certainly, in all its various forms, not evil but divine'.⁸ It might be argued that such thorough-going indifference

to the forms of actual things as is signified by this pantheism is symptomatic of narcissistic egoism, and anathema to the discriminatory powers of taste. Yet in Pater's aesthetic it actually strengthens these powers by stressing the interpretative act of the individual: the Creator Mundi

being therefore really identical with the soul of Bruno also, as the universe shapes itself to Bruno's reason, to his imagination, ever more and more articulately, he too becomes a sharer of the divine joy in that process of the formation of true ideas, which is really parallel to the process of creation, to the evolution of things. In a certain mystic sense, which some in every age of the world have understood, he, too, is the creator; himself actually a participator in the creative function.⁹

The old doctrine of indifference that applies specifically to Marius is not the Parmenidean 'abstract indifference' of the self-enclosed sphere;¹⁰ nor is it the 'indifferentism' that the world assumes of the aesthetic self in 'Diaphaneite';¹¹ nor is it the narcissistic indifferentism of 'Winckelmann' - 'with a passionate coldness such natures rejoice to be away from and past their former selves' - nor is it the actual indifference, the tolerance of evil that Aurelius exhibits at the Circus(I,p.241). Rather, it is the coming and going between the self and things which the imaginative intellect carries out constantly through the medium of taste, the active role of the self in organizing its experience that Marius realizes. But in this visionary moment the self is not the lonely selfhood of the Conclusion, isolated all the more by its desperate attempts to experience being: here, the self's 'seemingly active powers of apprehension were, in fact, but susceptibilities to influence'. Temporarily at least, the centre, that 'living and companionable spirit at work in all things' is everywhere, the circumference nowhere. Marius is at last fully at home in the world, his self 'entirely possessed by him', yet simultaneously 'a single process, in an intellectual or spiritual system external to it, diffused through all time and place - that great stream of spiritual energy, of which his own imperfect thoughts, yesterday or to-day, would be but the remote, and therefore imperfect pulsations'(II,pp.63-9). His self encompasses being and becoming, centre and circumference, and at this moment passes beyond nostalgic and narcissistic models of selfhood, and the model of the aesthetic self created in The Renaissance.

But however permanent the effects of his visionary experience (we are told that Marius regarded the rest of his life as 'a search for the equivalent of that Ideal, among so-called actual things' - II, p.72), the piercing of the flaming ramparts could only be momentary for Marius. Although it represents a genuine improvement in his spiritual condition, it is also a type of escape. It is still one of Marius's 'most characteristic and constant traits' that he longs 'for escape - for some sudden, relieving interchange, across the very spaces of life, it might be, along which he had lingered most pleasantly - for a lifting, from time to time, of the actual horizon' (II, p.106). And this escape from quotidian space also includes time. During the visionary experience, Marius is unaware of the passing of time; he is beyond the veil of the world. But Marius is rooted in finite temporality, and he must return to a view of death. What he takes with him from the experience of eternity is the possibility of some greater power 'behind the veil'. Appropriately, Marius's hope is symbolized by the dialogic image of a wrestler. Thus, he speaks of a wrestler closing with him at the end of 'Sunt Lacrimae Rerum'; the martyrs are described as wrestlers (II, p.191); Christ is 'the mighty wrestler' (II, p.195), and after Marius sacrifices himself for Cornelius, he feels - ironically - that he is an absurdity, a 'lonely wrestler' (II, p.213).

The image of the wrestler symbolizes the importance of the dialogue, dual 'divine spark' for Marius and Pater. The form finds its locus classicus in chapter twenty-four, which is an adapted translation of one of Lucian's more tedious dialogues, 'Hermotimus'. The dialogue is, at least superficially, a serious exploration of the claims made for the discipline of philosophy by the eponymous hero; and the form of the argument is conducted after the Platonic pattern.

The dialogue is deliberately placed between a description of the new Christian community, and the diary in which Marius records his reflections and mundane experiences. In this context - the dialogue of faith and the dialogue with the self - the Socratic dialogue degenerates into mere eristics: the form has nothing to offer either of the participants or Marius. Hermotimus, much younger in Pater's adaptation, is reduced to his 'first incertitude' (II, p.163) by the elder Lucian (Lycinus), who smugly asserts his

proof that philosophy is unnecessary to sensible living by his final analogy of a man pounding water with a mortar and pestle. But it is significant that Pater breaks off the dialogue at this point, for this last image is deeply ambiguous, applicable to Lucian or Hermotimus, or the form of the dialogue itself. Lucian has given Hermotimus nothing positive, certainly not the Socratic humility to start on ground of absolute ignorance. On the contrary, he has reduced his 'priceless pearl' (a deliberately oblique translation of "Θησαυρον" with new connotations of faith) by clever sophistry to metaphysical ashes. But Hermotimus, like Marius, is searching for more than philosophical verity, a point of which Lucian fails to take much account. The emptiness of the dialectic is pointed up by Pater's omission of the original dialogue's overtly comic devices. By doing so, Pater reduces the humorous element and exposes the prattling hollowness in both participants' claims to knowledge. The ironic stance of the Socratic ingenu Lucian comes to parody itself, and the whole dialogue, far from proving that philosophy is unnecessary to sensible living, now demonstrates the necessity for some scheme of life based on more than the immediate historical moment, or the yearning nostalgia for permanent security and rest.

For Marius, who is seeking 'description of the metaphysical landscapes through which the soul is transported as it undergoes what might be described as spiritual training',¹² the whole encounter is unsatisfactory, and he is left feeling more than ever an isolate in his own time - "and we too desire, not a fair one, but the fairest of all. Unless we find him, we shall think we have failed" (II, pp. 161, 171). In the context of Marius's life, these words recall the search for the metaphysical fairest. Lucian's shallow, reductive scepticism acts as a check (ἑπὶ σφύρα), and uses cognition to fence in that sceptical state of mind he is concerned to preserve. As Diogenes Laertius states, 'the sceptics say that their goal is suspension of judgment, in whose wake tranquillity follows like a shadow'.¹³ In the context of this statement, Lucian offers not truth, but ataraxia. Marius's scepticism, however, is active, inquiring doubt, in deference to knowledge, and not content to rest at the flaming walls of his own or the world's understanding. The gloom of the Appian Way leads him to fear his personal failure, and to recollect faint traces of the Passion story, and the incident on the road to Emmaus. Both

of these Christian motifs are entirely different dialogues, ones which seem to transcend the morning's hollow questionings. But Marius cannot visualize clearly: like the disciples, he cannot recognize Christ - 'gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded/I do not know whether a man or a woman'.¹⁴ However close he comes to Christianity, Marius still approaches it through his own schema of things. Just as in the reception of 'metaphysical formulae, all depends, as regards their actual and ulterior result, on the pre-existant qualities of that soil of human nature into which they fall' (I, p. 136), so theoretical systems are, 'so to speak, mere equivalents of temperament' (II, p. 90). It is still through 'the unchangeable law of his temperament, to the eye, to the visual faculty of mind' that theories, even Christianity, reach him (II, p. 106). Whatever theoria Marius holds to, he must reckon it with the 'unchangeable law' of his aesthetic imagination, must reconcile it with accumulated preferences and tastes. In his continued self-exposure to experience there is a certain optimism: his feelings about the pagan heaven, the Apollonian Arcadia, for instance, must surely be ambivalent ('"they scarcely feel at all"', Hermotimus declares - II, p. 143) - at once a dread of, and a longing for such an hypostatized condition. This is partly why Marius does not enter the Christian church - 'might this new vision, like the malignant beauty of pagan Medusa, be exclusive of any admiring gaze upon anything but itself?' (II, p. 103). Marius now knows he cannot live in a state of aesthetic gratification, or of beatific vision, but must come to terms with his longing to do so.

Marius does indeed come to terms with this longing, and it is part of the novel's strategy that he does not realize his own achievement of this. So far in the novel, Marius has quested, ever-sceptical, but always open to education through his experience of being. In the chapter entitled 'Sunt Lacrimae Rerum', in the dialogue not with Lucian or Christ but with his self, he senses the latent power of a sympathy that approaches mystical love for all nature. This power is a practical equivalent of his vision, reaching out effortlessly beyond him yet possessing him, and like this vision, is infans. It is a subtle irony that Marius speaks here in his own voice for the only time in the novel, but cannot articulate his achievement. All he can shore against his gnostic intuition of the fundamental evil nature of the world is 'a certain permanent and general power of compassion' -

a phrase that does not indicate the intensely mystical nature of Marius's love. (II, p. 182) It is one more instance in the novel of the absence of centre because the centre is everywhere, circumference nowhere; and indeed, the presence of that love reminds Marius of his visionary moment.

Significantly, Marius intuitively feels the practical power of compassion or love while still a pagan. Its genesis is not Christian dogma but his own aesthetic imagination; his final sacrifice, therefore, is a finer, more Christ-like act because his pagan society sees it as utterly pointless. As Hannah Arendt pointed out,

because they so clearly recognized the affective nature of compassion, which can overcome us like fear without our being able to fend it off, the ancients regarded the most compassionate person as no more entitled to be called the best than the most fearful. Both emotions, because they are purely passive, make action possible. This is the reason Aristotle treated compassion and fear together.¹⁵

But Marius's compassion, stemming from his vision, does not remain passive, either towards the world or towards his self. He experiences it as a power of the imagination and reason conjoined, a power that unifies a fragmented self, "in the dissolution of a world, or in that dissolution of self, which is, for every one, no less than the dissolution of the world it represents for him" (II, pp. 183). It also touches "that absolute ground amid all the changes of phenomena", which Marius has been searching for all his life.

The end of the novel - Marius's homecoming and his self-sacrifice for Cornelius - relates how he achieves this absolute ground by enacting what he has hitherto only observed and speculated upon: the power of love to overcome death and evil. In coming home, Marius finally rids himself of his yearning and nostalgia - 'so often in his thoughts' (II, p. 205) - for an hypostatized existence such as that embodied by the pagan heaven. Symbolically, he re-enters the infant whose tomb has opened in his absence, and determines 'to bury all that, deep below the surface' of his mind. What he buries is the endless Cyrenaic quest, the vicious model of Uroboros, signified here by the infant in the tomb, death touching birth. In burying this, Marius turns towards the hope embodied by the altogether different Christian

interment described in chapter twenty-six(II,p.188), which in its turn, presents such a contrast to the hopeless death of Aurelius's son in chapter eighteen(II,p.58).

Marius's meditation at home is a turning-point, 'in some sort a forcible disruption from the world'; and this is reflected in his later actions - no longer is he a spectator, but implicated in active service. At home, and on his death-bed (one prefiguring the other, as the first sentences of the book's last chapter indicate) he reviews his life and discovers his goal to have been 'revelation, vision, the discovery of a vision, the seeing of a perfect humanity, in a perfect world'(II,p.218). And his method of achieving such vision was 'the being something'. It is this present participle that summarizes the others here - seeing, having, doing, unfolding. Marius sees his life in a new perspective, as a long preparation for 'some ampler vision which should take up into itself and explain this world's delightful shows'. But the vision seems in retrospect, to be unrealized - all Marius thinks he can do is make 'the house ready for the possible guest; the tablet of the mind white and smooth, for whatsoever divine fingers might choose to write there'(II, pp.219-20). The tabula rasa image is also used in chapter eight, where Marius considered then that abstract theory 'was to be valued only just so far as it might serve to clear the tablet of the mind from suppositions no more than half realizable, or wholly visionary, leaving it in flawless evenness of surface to the impressions of an experience, concrete and direct'(I,p.141). The difference between these last two statements is the measure of the distance Marius has come, while still insisting upon the primacy of his felt experience as containing the '"absolute ground"' of selfhood. To the last, he is balanced by the narrative between hope and despair, the 'mystic bread' is between his lips, and the irony of the ending only serves to underline this. It is an irony that has accompanied Marius throughout his life: it lay beneath his 'self-possession', and his acceptance of the world 'only as a kind of irony'(I,p.133). It also accompanies Christianity - of the two occasions on which Marius half-hears Cornelius singing a Christian hymn to himself, one is in the context of contemporary Roman religion, and the other, the latest Roman philosophy(I,p.136; II,p.13). The two threads of irony finally intertwine when Marius, in 'the very depths of his desolation', dwells on the 'irony of men's fate'. He thinks he will die with 'no plenary grace'(II,p.214), but the last few lines of the book contradict him, cautiously weighing hope against his

despair: 'and martyrdom, as the church had always said, [is] a kind of sacrament with plenary grace' (II, p.224).

By his own lights, Marius fails at the novel's end, for he is no nearer achieving that continuous sense of securely unified selfhood at the end of his life than he was when he first left home. His centre remains empty, and as a result he appears to remain a mesocosm, a solitary outsider at the boundary of all realms and himself their boundary: the wafer hovers between his lips.

Yet Marius does achieve something, in spite of himself, and what he gains is intelligible in terms of the telos of the imaginative intellect he has held by throughout his life. His self is not substance or centre but what the imaginative reason understands of his experience, and what his accumulated preferences declare is his model of selfhood. If he does not gain secure unity, at least he has ceased to search for it in the wrong places. Instead, he turns to that early feeling 'not reminiscent but prescient of the future', a kind of inverted déjà vu (I, p.114). He acknowledges to himself when he returns home that his search was for the wrong goal, that it was, in a sense, a Seinsvergessenheit. At this point, Marius no longer recollects his selfhood, trying to base it on the lost innocence of childhood, but repeats it in time. In doing so, he is able to release the passive power of compassion. Marius's self becomes his search, becomes all that he has done or thought. Prefiguring Nietzsche, he becomes what he is, and his last existential act finally creates of his self a deliberate absence of centre that is entirely different from the narcissistic self-erasures of, for instance, Spiritual Adventures. That act consigns Marius irrevocably to the flux, and signals his acceptance of his position in it - although he is not conscious of this at the time. It is this that, at the end, enables him to feel part of a human community stretching beyond his own death. This is the novel's genuine piercing of the flammantia moenia mundi. If the wafer is ambiguous, even ironical, it is at least not Charon's penny under the tongue - Marius has travelled this far beyond the moenia of his society. And his death, in similar circumstances to that of Pico della Mirandola and most Paterian exiles, is lent a profundity of meaning by his life that does not occur elsewhere in Pater's oeuvre. Pater's deliberately failed novel is his most successful form, and Marius embodies his most optimistic model of selfhood.

Conclusion

'Yet he was, as we know, no hero, no heroic martyr - had indeed no right to be' (II, pp. 213-14). The echo of Prufrock is hard to miss; but it would be the wrong analogy to compare Marius and Prufrock, however much Marius resembles him in his hesitation and self-conscious isolation from the world. To Marius, who recognizes the force of compassionate love, who practises ascêsis and gives his life for Cornelius, the ending of 'The Waste Land' would have been acceptable as one way out of the prison of the new Cyrenaicism: 'Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata'.¹⁶ In both works selfhood consists superficially of ideas we do not normally acknowledge as constituents of ourselves; but it is crucial to understand such a selfhood not as presenting a facsimile of our selves so much as a formal schema, a model of selfhood. This model describes not the world's actions, but the self's own structures; and thus re-enacts the movement of the world on its self by portraying not action but reaction. In a number of ways Marius is the Tiresias of the novel, for all the characters are contained in him, rather as the matroshka-doll archetype of Tiresias contains the characters of 'The Waste Land'.

Yet it is a misnomer to call the protagonists of 'The Waste Land' and Marius characters. In Eliot's poem they acquire identity not through individualization, but through being modern projections of ancient archetypes; and in Marius selfhood is created of metaphysical choices lived out in experience. In The Renaissance, most of these model choices are bi-polar in nature - centrifugal and fluctional, or centripetal and static. But at Marius's moment of vision a change occurs. He finds himself able to generate from the 'surplus' of experience, from an 'unreduced residue' of imaginative reason,¹⁷ an Other, similar to the unrecognized apparition born of the Antarctic explorers's despair, and the unrecognized apparition of Christ born of the disciples's despair. It is an identity which temporarily delivers him from the closed circle of the Conclusion's selfhood and the immediate historical moment. But Marius's Other remains unrecognized, however: after his vision, Marius returns to ordinary living, his selfhood still changing and discontinuous, its unity as problematic as its freedom from conditions external to it. It is only after his

return home that Marius is able to give up his life for the Other. That return, like du Bellay's return, enables him to perform his finest act, and to realize his compassion.

Marius's decision to give away his life is a decision to stop journeying. To journey - the fact of being on the road without the possibility of ever stopping - turns the finite into the infinite. Now although the finite is closed, there is always a chance of getting out of it, whereas infinite space has no issue: it is a prison. Conversely, all totally issueless places are infinite. In these terms, the Conclusion to The Renaissance is issueless, for it demands perpetual journeying in the realm of aesthetic objects, and it increases the loneliness of the still discontinuous self. Only when Marius relinquishes his nostalgia in return for a truly historical existence, and only when he ceases to see his self narcissistically as 'the last of his race' (II, p.207), and instead as linked 'to the generations to come in the world he was leaving' (II, p.221), does he finally find himself at home in a bitter and ruthless world, with values and hopes that are shared.

And because of his highly solitary, even narcissistic life, therefore, he has 'no right' to a heroic martyrdom such as takes place in chapter twenty-six. His is an obscure death, as it has to be, otherwise the novel may end like 'The Death of Saint Narcissus', where a narcissist welcomes martyrdom as the ultimate sensation in order to fill an inner void. Marius, instead of remaining trapped in Prufrock's narcissistic self-consciousness, sympathizes, controls his self, and is able to commit himself to his Other. He succeeds here where other Paterian anti-heroes fail. But the opaque and discontinuous self, caught up in the 'bewildering toils' of the actual world it has resisted so long, cannot recognize its own victory. Marius fails, ironically, 'amid the effects even of what might appear irredeemable loss' (II, p.184). In a form of heterological paradox, then, if he succeeds, he fails, and if he fails, he succeeds. For as the Conclusion to The Renaissance proved, unity of self cannot be welded out of fragmented moments that will always be fragments. Pater, however, could never relinquish his aesthetic method, and so this aim was always to be frustrated. Yet Marius demonstrates a form of selfhood that may be experienced by the imaginative reason, but not known by the analytic intellect, through the mediation of the aesthetic method, if loss of centre

can be endured, the discriminated moments abandoned, and the fragmented self relinquish both notions of a separate chaotic flux and a static permanence. It is in such failure to achieve unity that the self's self-imposed aesthetic prison is opened and the compassionate imaginative reason, 'in freedom and effective, at last', enacts that peace, shantih, which passes understanding.¹⁸

It passes Marius's understanding, but not the reader's, if he has read the novel aright - if he has endured loss of narrative centre, abandoned his expectation of incident and discriminating moments, and his expectation of a narrative that pretends to be sealed within its own span of history. Marius the Epicurean denies all of this: it would appear to be what it has always been dismissed as - a failed novel. Yet, I suggest, this 'failure' is deliberate on Pater's part, for only by writing the novel as he did could he embody Marius's model of compassionate selfhood so effectively. The novel therefore comes under the same rule of heterological paradox that Marius's selfhood demonstrates. If it succeeds, as a recognizable novel, it fails; and if it fails, then it succeeds. Marius is a success, therefore, and its success stems directly from the model of selfhood that it embodies.

Notes to Chapter Six

1. Moore, Avowals (New York, 1919), p.193. James, The Letters of Henry James, edited by Percy Lubbock (New York, 1920), vol. I, p.222. Symons, Figures of Several Centuries (London, 1916), p.331, note 1. Gosse, Critical Kit-Kats (London, 1913), p.266.
2. See Plato and Platonism, op.cit., p.58.
3. Marius the Epicurean, II, p.90. All future references to the novel will be included in the text after quotation.
4. 'Diaphaneitè', op.cit., p.250.
5. Vernon Lee (Violet Paget), 'The Handling of Words', in Life and Letters, 9 (1933-34), pp.287-310, p.303.
6. The Poems of Tennyson, op.cit., 'The Lotos Eaters', l.11, p.430. Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats, second edition (London, 1950), 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', p.44.
7. Gaston de Latour, op.cit., pp.142-3.
8. Ibid., p.143.
9. Ibid., p.142-3.
10. Plato and Platonism, p.42.
11. 'Diaphaneitè', op.cit., p.252.
12. E. Bréhier, The History of Philosophy: The Hellenistic and Roman Age, translated by W. Baskin (Chicago, 1965), p.132.
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14. T.S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', op.cit., p.72 (V, lls.362-3).
15. Men in Dark Times (London, 1973), p.22.
16. Op.cit., p.75 (V, l.432).
17. Adorno, op.cit.. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, op.cit., p.80, note 2.
18. Imaginary Portraits, op.cit., p.153. 'The Waste Land', op.cit., p.80, note on V, l.433.

CONCLUSION

It is because language is the house of Being, that we reach what is by constantly going through this house.

— Martin Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?' in Poetry, Language, Thought, p.132.

What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the real plight of dwelling as the plight? Yet as soon as man gives thought to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that calls mortals into their dwelling.

— Ibid., 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p.161.

It is time to draw to a close. What has this discussion achieved, to what conclusion do the critical analyses point? Before answering these questions, let me first restate the thesis's central hypothesis.

There is no literally true selfhood - it can only be described in terms other than itself, and expressed by such techniques as metaphor. There are, then, merely better or worse models of selfhood. This is the fundamental position of the thesis regarding the nature of selfhood. The model nature of the self has two important consequences for the literary mediation of selfhood. The first is where an author remains unaware of the metaphoric nature of the self. In this state he is used by the model, unlike an author who sees through the metaphoric illusion, and can therefore manipulate the model. This consequence, though, is not an either/or: an author may also write with some awareness of the model nature of the selfhood he is creating in his work. This leads us to the second consequence. Because no absolutely true selfhood can be created to which one may appeal, and because the aesthetic mediation of a model of selfhood necessarily entails exposing it to myriad possibilities of fictional being, an author cannot ever be fully aware of the model he is using. All that can be said is that he is either more or less aware of it.

This is the argument of the thesis regarding selfhood. How does it apply to literary works? Does it aid us in making judgments of value in literature? It has been the burden of the thesis to prove that there is a close relation between the literary

value of a work and the model of selfhood that it embodies, a relation hitherto neglected by criticism in general. It has been neglected probably because the relation is not simply causal (a work's value is not dependant solely on its model); and because of the critical difficulty of a hermeneutic circle that simultaneously adduces a work's literary value from a model of selfhood, and a model of selfhood from the work. Yet, this relation does exist, and is proven by the individual analyses of the texts.

Thus, in chapter one, Wilde's criticism and Hardy's Tess are based on models of selfhood that really contain a one-sided view of existence - Wilde in his dynamic model, Hardy in his deterministic model. As structures of selfhood, these models are in effect deficient. Yet Hardy and Wilde succeed in their different literary enterprises because they are sufficiently aware of their models to manipulate them in the texts. Wilde's awareness of how art can initiate and represent new ways of thought, new directions for future action, is the mainspring of his model of selfhood. This central paradox, that it is art and the art of criticism which define nature for us, both creates and is created by, his dynamic model. Hardy's awareness of how the self is caught in the trammels of the world, and his deterministic model resulting from this, is both the cause and the effect of a split narrator from which much of his novel's power derives.

In chapter two there is another opposition of antithetical models, not only between but also within the texts. Instead of treating the self as either free or determined, Conrad and Meredith in 'Heart of Darkness' and One of Our Conquerors created a selfhood that exists as a relationship to itself. Both Marlow and Nesta are the exemplars of this. Opposed to this model is that of Kurtz and Victor, whose selves are ordained, atemporal, substantive. In each novel the author has successfully embodied these models because he is sufficiently aware of the consequences that the models set in motion and the literary problems they pose. The major difficulty that the models exacerbate is that of speechlessness. In general, the self cannot reveal its 'real' self, for it can be only an approximation to itself. But the model of self where the self exists as self-relation is more difficult to articulate

than other models, largely because there are no easy iconic reference points for it in the tradition of Western literature (what E.R. Curtius calls the topoi of inexpressibility, which do little more than demonstrate a writer's inability to handle a large subject, are not applicable here).¹ By their awareness of and response to this problem central to the model, Conrad and Meredith created successful novels. Their success here in integrating model and narrative structure can be seen in contrast to 'The Return', where a crude separation is evident between model and narrative structure.

Chapters three and four are concerned with occasions where the model of selfhood is a psychologically deficient one, and where the unsatisfactory representation of the model's deficiency gives rise to flaws in the work. This happens because the author, aware of the particular model he was creating, was not sufficiently aware of the consequences of the model when mediated by the text. As a result, these works become trapped by their model - they are used by it, and in effect, their writing takes on the attributes of their models. This lack of awareness creates different flaws in each text, for each contains entirely different narrative matter, belong to different genres, and stress different aspects of the model. Nevertheless, they all stem from the same root misconception of their model. The monotony of style in The Picture of Dorian Gray, the monologic narrative of Moore's two novels, the erroneous fusion of Symbolism and autobiography in Spiritual Adventures - these major flaws in the texts (to take only those in chapter three) are created by the authors's misapplication of the model of narcissistic selfhood in their works.

Where literary failure in chapters three and four arise from misunderstanding of the adopted models, the powerful beauty, narrative closure and circularity, and confusion in The Renaissance stem from an inadequate understanding of the consequences of its model. Behind the exhilaration of its Conclusion lies too neat a resolution of its own methods - a harmony that is neither artistically nor philosophically earned. From the fragmented moments unity would be cast; but the very conditions of selfhood also drew the self back to the timeless, diaphanous and universal, thereby destroying historicity and freedom, and leaving it prey

to the very narcissistic isolation and nostalgic angst it sought to resolve.

But Pater did come to an understanding of his model's failure in The Renaissance. In Marius he constructed a model of selfhood that first loses and then gains itself through its own failure to achieve a recognizable unity. The world conspires against it, the self conspires against itself - and this is essential, for it must strive against its self if it is to realize itself. Above all else, the self must fail in this conflict, and dearly wish to succeed. The wish to become whole and the will-to-founder stand opposed; and yet the wish to become whole is the presupposition of genuine foundering. In the positive negations of apophatic theology, Marius fails and dies, nameless, in ignominy; and triumphs. The styles and narratives that embody this model in the novel indicate Pater's clearer awareness of its nature, and his understanding of how it is mediated by novelistic structures. The ancient mystical trope of centre and circumference, found throughout the novel, is the key to Pater's success here. Marius is usually regarded as a 'failed' novel, but only because it has been judged with reference to what are taken as the norms of nineteenth century novels. If it is judged on its ability to present its model of selfhood to the reader, then it must be deemed a successful novel - one that achieves success through paradoxical 'failure'.

By means of various critical analyses throughout these six chapters, then, I have sought to demonstrate the existence of a relation between ideas of selfhood and literary value in a text. But of itself, this is a disappointing conclusion; and it is disappointing because it does not rise to the general plane and state the usefulness of the theory of models of self to the evaluation of literary worth. Lacking this, one might legitimately question the introduction of yet another set of critical terms to an already overcrowded critical space. Are there none already there that would do just as well? And does the end result of the critical procedure here justify the procedure? To answer these questions I must reveal that I have had another purpose in writing this thesis: namely, to prove the necessity of taking into critical account the structures of selfhood that are implicit in every text.

Any worth that the theory of models has for the act of evaluation hinges on two questions - if an author can be unaware of the model he is using, what is it that causes this unawareness? Is it possible to detect within the text the cause of this unawareness of the model of selfhood the writer is using? For if the cause is unknown, then the theory has no critical ground upon which to start its empirical analyses. I think that it is possible to answer this question, however, and I shall try to unearth the cause of this unawareness below.

As I have already said, no writer can be completely aware of his model of selfhood in a text; for the model only exists as a series of artistic decisions within the text. To be sure, there are certain elements that remain constant in a model - the typical reminiscence of a nostalgic self, for instance. But if a model of self only exists as artistic decisions, then for the writer at the time of writing, there are myriad possibilities of style, tone, circumstance, character and so on, which will create the model. He must always be unaware of his model and only in control of it in as much as he understands and controls his art.

This is true for all writers in the tradition of Western literature. But it is more pressingly true for authors writing in the modern period, the beginnings of which is dealt with in this thesis. For it is the human condition in the modern period, with its roots in Galileo, Darwin, the Reformation, and state revolution, to endure this unawareness not merely in fiction, but in life itself.

The phenomenon of alienation and dehumanization has been well analysed elsewhere, and needs no rehearsal here.² Its origins lie in the loss of religious certainty, the rise of the historical disciplines, the scientific method, and above all, Cartesian doubt:

the world loss of modern philosophy, whose introspection discovered consciousness as the inner sense with which one senses his senses and found it to be the only guaranty of reality, is different not only in degree from the age-old suspicion of the philosophers toward the world and toward the others with whom they shared the world; the philosopher no longer turns from the world of deceptive perishability to another world of eternal truth, but turns away from both and withdraws into himself. What he discovers in the region of the inner self is, again, not an image whose permanence can be beheld and contemplated, but, on the contrary, the constant movement of sensual perceptions and the no less constantly moving activity of the mind.³

This 'discovery' is not limited to philosophy and philosophers - it is also demonstrated by much of modern literature and art; and it is present in all the texts analysed above. The invisible flammanitia moenia of pre-modern civilization within which the author wrote his works had crumbled; and with their absence there occurred a crucial 'loss of traditional truth, that is, of the concept of truth underlying our whole tradition'.⁴

With regard to the nature of selfhood, the concept of truth had always been theological in origin. As Hannah Arendt puts it,

in brief, the answer to the question 'Who am I?' is simply: 'You are a man - whatever that may be'; and the answer to the question 'What am I?' can be given only by God who made man. The question about the nature of man is no less a theological question than the question about the nature of God; both can be settled only within the framework of a divinely revealed answer.⁵

But during the last four centuries God has been steadily removed from the centre: if he is not dead now, then he is certainly Pascal's deus absconditus. Yet the relation between the divine and the earthly must remain, for a self cannot define what selfhood is. Selfhood becomes, then, persona abscondita.

The movement is a crucial one to the modern conception of the model of selfhood. What it entails is an absence of centre in the model that stems from the absence of centre in the world: there is nothing 'behind' the model, only the model. Just as history has been proved by historiography to have no actor behind the scenes controlling it - no Platonic god, no Providence, Nature, World Spirit, class interest and the like - so selfhood has no longer any 'divinely revealed answer' to itself. It remains unanswered, a hypothesis of what it might be.

A writer, then, is not fully aware of his model of selfhood partly because he is in the midst of it while writing (as we are 'in' language), and partly because the nature of the modern condition and the position of language refuse him an absolute definition of selfhood. But this answer to the question posed above is still an unsatisfactory one - unsatisfactory because it does not tell us anything more about how the theory of models may be used to judge the literary value of a work.

Yet from this a statement regarding literary value may be derived. To say that we can only live by models of reality, and that only models of selfhood can be embodied by literature is not merely negative. Alienation and dehumanization can be positive - indeed in terms of literary value, the concept of alienation, of Verfremdungseffekt and of ostranenie, is a familiar one.⁶ But it can also be positive in a way that makes of the model nature of selfhood a felix culpa - the doctrine that sees in Adam's primal fall the happy pre-condition for Christ's salvation of man. No literary model is pre-eminent: each one is contingent: it is an approximation to what selfhood, nameless and hidden, might actually be. It is a condition of issuelessness, Ausweglosigkeit, one that resembles the position of man in language - the condition depicted in Sartre's Huis Clos, Kafka's fiction, Beckett's fiction and plays. In this position there is no escape from immersion in words or mundane models of selfhood. But if we cannot get outside the house of Being, we can console ourselves with interpretation; and interpretation involves value.

No author can be completely aware of the model he is using. But he can be aware of this limitation; and to the extent that he is aware of this unawareness, he has the opportunity to write better. For awareness of his incomplete awareness of a model is inextricably linked to his awareness of the extent to which a model is embodied by the text. To be aware that a model cannot be fully known involves the author in first being aware of how, in writing, the myriad ravellings of narrative can be twisted to form a model of selfhood, as yet incomplete at the moment of writing because the work is incomplete. A work can be judged as better or worse, then, in so far as this awareness of unawareness is integrated with the more traditional critical problems of narrative, style and tone. These problems are fundamentally self-generating in the text: narrative, for instance, always has the tendency to generate more narrative. There is no reason why these or any other linguistic features in the text ought to form a model effortlessly (language is neither logical nor reasonable), and indeed they do not. But nor does an author impose a model on his work. The author creates the model through the text: in the text the model is transformed from idea to paradeigma. This transformation is brought about by the author,

but also by the text itself. For if an author is aware that he cannot know the full extent of his model, he must also be aware to some extent that the text creates the model. It does so because "the meaning of a text goes beyond its author not sometimes but always". Meaning goes beyond him because writing resists interpretation, and it resists interpretation because we are always outside it. Interpretation is possible only in so far as we are outside the text: being inside would mean that we would know the text's entire meanings, and also know what selfhood really is. But there is no monadic solution to text or selfhood: we can never be insiders, for "one understands differently when one understands at all".⁷

This hermeneutic potential of the text is the ground of literary evaluation. If the author does not allow for it, then he will crudely impose his model upon the text, will see himself as sole author, and authoriser, of meaning. The work will betray this inexorably: the model will not be transformed into paradeigma but will remain idea; and as a result, the text will exhibit signs of incoherence or confusion in form, style, or narrative. However, if the author has recognized the radical incompleteness of the model and its precarious existence in the very stuff of the text, then the work radiates; and what it radiates is its own disclosure. Its hermeneutic potential illuminates the interpreter, if he is open to its disclosure.

If an author does not understand in what way a model is inextricably in the text, then, he will not be aware of his incomplete knowledge of the self's model; if he is not aware of his incomplete knowledge of the self's model, he will not understand in what way a model is inextricably in the text. This circle is the answer to the question above concerning the cause of an author's unawareness of his model; and reveals how models of selfhood may be used in the evaluation of literature.

This theory of models of selfhood is particularly useful in the analysis of modern, post-Darwinian literature; for, as we have seen, it falls to modern literature to function as 'after' theologies, or post-theologies. As in Marx's historical evangelism, or in Heidegger's invocation of the Seinsfrage, modern literature sounds grace-notes of theological metaphor. It is the attempt to

find a ground to human experience in the abyss of Dasein, to an existence in the world that appears irredeemable. The model nature of selfhood is one such resonance. Its embodiments in the inversion of art and nature, the double narrator, the kernel and the haze, the nebulous Idea, the centre and circumference record an awareness of the presence of absence, the imperative to grapple with it in the text, and the reluctant struggle to abandon cherished certitudes:

Phoebus is dead, ephebe But Phoebus was
A name for something that never could be named.
There was a project for the sun and is.

There is a project for the sun. The sun
Must bear no name, gold flourisher, but be
In the difficulty of what it is to be.

Notes to Conclusion

1. European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, translated by Willard R. Trask (New York, 1963), pp. 159-62.
2. For a succinct summary, see George Steiner, Heidegger, Fontana Modern Masters, edited by Frank Kermode (London, 1978), pp. 90-95, 140-141.
3. Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago, 1958), p.293.
4. Ibid., p.294.
5. Ibid., p.11.
6. See, for example, Fredric Jameson, The Prison-House of Language (Princeton, 1972), pp.50-51.
7. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, translation ed. by Garrett Barden and John Cumming (London, 1975), p.264. Quoted in Frank Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy (Harvard, 1979), p.39.
8. The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens, op.cit., 'Notes toward a Supreme Fiction', p.381.

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The latter two sections follow alphabetical order by author (or editor, in the third). The sole exception to this order in these sections occurs within each author listing under 'Primary Sources', where the order is thus: author's works, letters, bibliographies of his works, and bibliographies of writings about him. The first section proceeds from bibliographies of bibliographies, to standard bibliographical materials, to bibliographies of special subjects. Within each sub-section the order is alphabetical by title.

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